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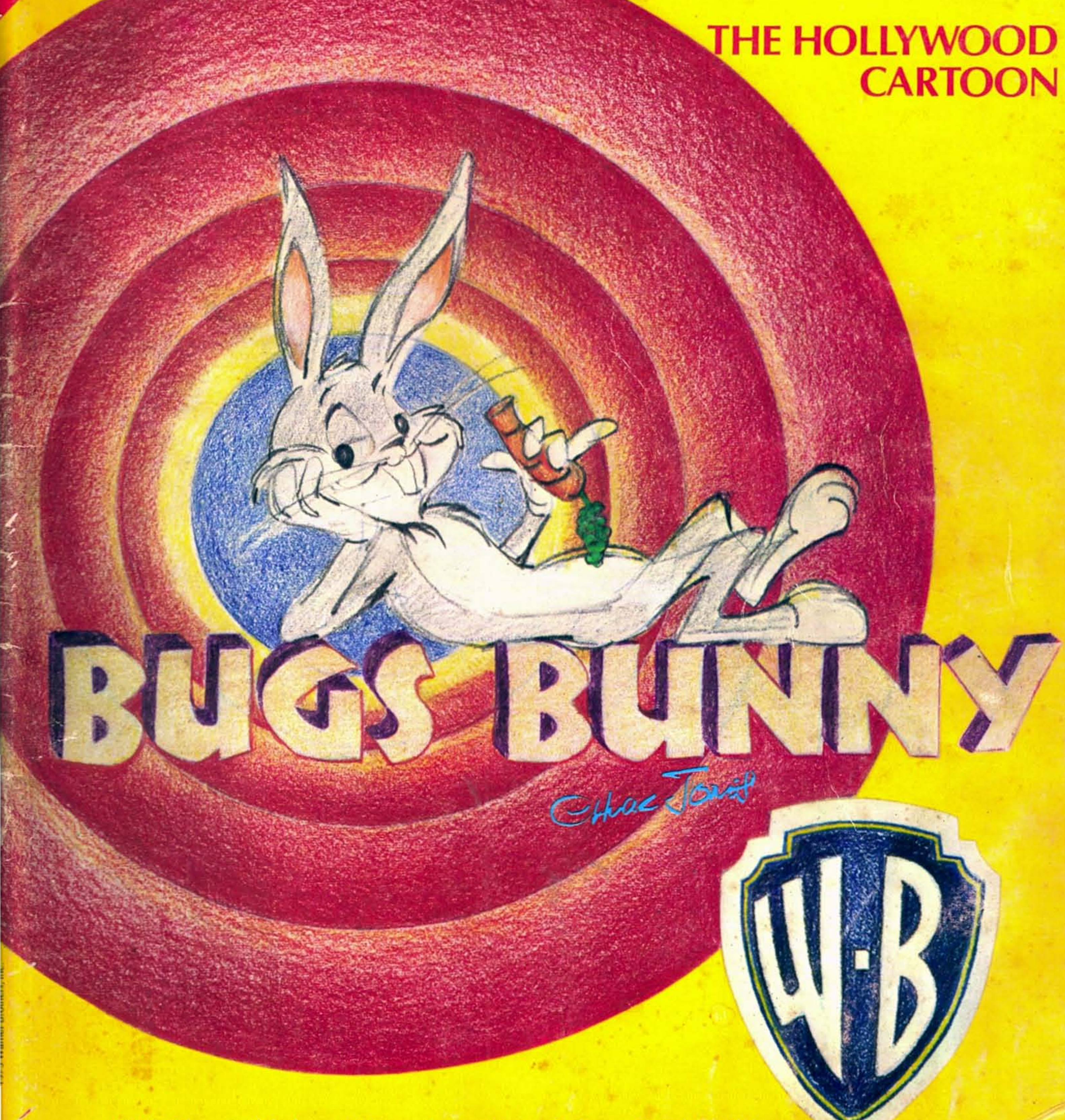
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on the cover:
Bugs Bunny,
drawn for Film Comment
by Chuck Jones

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JOURNALS

LONDON JOURNAL

by Jonathan Rosenbaum

October 8: Victor Erice's EL ESPIRITU DE LA COLMENA (THE SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE). I've been trying all weekend to come up with an adequate description of this lovely Spanish film, but I can't get anywhere. A colleague recently spoke of the movie as "beguiling," which seems like an honest start. Two remarkably expressive little girls, Ana Torrent and Isabel Telleria, see James Whale's FRANKENSTEIN at a traveling film show that stops in their village in Castille. Afterwards, Isabel explains to her sister that the monster is still alive—and indeed, he makes a brief appearance in the final reel. The girls' father is a bee-keeper who broods over Maeterlinck, while the mother writes unexplained letters to someone in France. Isabel plays dead for a bit, and Ana believes her. Ana befriends a fugitive soldier who is eventually killed.

I don't know what sense to make of either the plot or Erice's beautiful honey-tone colors and honeycomb compositions, but I find the film haunting and rather spellbinding in a muted way, and emotionally it all *seems* to add up to something. Like Mervyn Peake's unnerving fantasy novella *Boy in Darkness*, its overall effect is unmistakable yet strangely unaccountable, at least by me. All I can do is point and hope that you'll get a chance to encounter it.

October 10: A program of films and extracts featuring Duke Ellington at the National Film Theatre, judiciously selected, arranged, and presented by David Meeker and Charles Fox. The earliest treat—and the first recording of Ellington on film—is BLACK AND TAN FANTASY (1929), directed by Dudley Murphy the same year as his Bessie Smith film, ST. LOUIS BLUES, with an equally creaky plot and a lot more arty chiaroscuro. But it is full of indelible details and moments: Duke's elegant rehearsal of the title tune with a trumpeter, interrupted by the arrival of two piano removers ("Move your anatomy from that mahogany!"); a nightmarish dance routine of five men of decreasing heights in tuxedos on a polished, mirror-like floor, combining cancerous Busby Berkeley-like images of multiplicity with a period species of voodoo jive; a death scene worthy of Little Nell's, with all the Ellington sidemen crowded around Freddie Washington's bed playing a somber blackout melody (the title tune again) and projecting tasteful death-shadows on the wall, capped by a final image of Duke fading and blurring out like a candle flame as the dancer-heroine loses consciousness.

The last excerpt in the program, from DUKE ELLINGTON AT THE WHITE HOUSE (1969), offers the satisfying spectacle of Ellington sharing a stage with Nixon without losing an ounce of cool or integrity in the process, outclassing his sponsor with every gesture of courtesy and wit and leaving no doubts at all about who is the presiding nobility. It's a significant contrast to Nixon's nauseating John Ford tribute, which contrived to remove the Brechtian distance from the old dodger's vision and leave us with a chauvinistic postage-stamp of mythology for right-wing auteurists to slobber over—the perfect companion-piece to Ronald Reagan's program introduction to Bogdanovich's DIRECTED BY JOHN FORD at the New York Film Festival in 1971.

Other parts of this Ellington anthology raise the whole complex issue of compatibility between jazz and film as independent and/or simultaneous artforms: clearly the best jazz doesn't always add up to the best cinema, and the contrast of filmic approaches to the music is interesting for its illustration of diverse ways of dealing with the problem. A lunatic extract from MURDER AT THE VANITIES (Mitchell Leisen, 1934) frantically interlaces plot and performance, ending with the entire Ellington band murdered by a spray of machine-gun bullets; the quasi-abstract title credits of CHANGE OF MIND (Robert Stevens, 1969) give the music a more neutral surface to play against, but wind up serving as a relatively static backdrop. Perhaps the only moment in the entire evening when jazz *becomes* cinema occurs in Will Cowan's wonderful SALUTE TO DUKE ELLINGTON, a Universal short of 1950: in the midst of a tune, Ray Nance steps forward and "improvises" Louis Armstrong in everything but his music—aural improvisation suddenly blossoming into visual improvisation as he mugs and mimes his way through an inventory of recognizable Satchmo stances, in a spirit perfectly matching that of the music around him.

October 13: The same issue of musical and filmic values affecting one another crops up with a revival of GUYS AND DOLLS on BBC television. Nearly all of the critical accounts of this underrated movie suggest that it's weakened by the "unprofessional" singing of Marlon Brando and Jean Simmons; for my money, Frank Loesser's music has never come across better. Why? Because the vulnerability of Brando and Simmons performing these tunes enhances their characters, making them unusually tactile as musical-comedy figures.

The slight quavers and hesitations in their voices as they approach and probe at certain notes give their songs—"I'll Know," "A Woman in Love," "If I Were a Bell," "Luck Be a Lady"—an additional emotional layer precisely because of the risks and tensions involved, which immediately translate themselves into the emotional risks taken by Sky Masterson and Sister Sarah Brown. (Is GUYS AND DOLLS the only Method musical?) Listen to Robert Alda and Isabel Bigley in the original-cast album of the stage production, and you'll hear to what extent "professionalism" can bleach out or eliminate these touching overtones, giving us a more polished surface with much less sense of the human beings/actors behind the voices. Which only demonstrates that an aesthetic for the film musical, *musically speaking*, shouldn't necessarily be the same aesthetic used on stage musicals.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 83

Ana Torrent and Isabel Telleria in Victor Erice's THE SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE.

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JOURNALS

ISTANBUL JOURNAL
by Gerald Weales

An Italian moviemaker, stopping in Istanbul long enough for a quick look at the catch-as-catch-can methods of the Turkish film business, smiled, shook his head and said, "It's like the early days of the movies." So I was told by a Turkish moviemaker with a touch of bemused pride in his voice. The bemusement, I assume, was the standard Istanbul state-of-mind, an affectionate attraction to complication an incipient disaster; the pride was more specific. Şerif Gören is one of the producers of Yilmaz Güney's films, and Güney is one of the few serious filmmakers in a hustling business in which the chief product is a flashy, hit-and-run commercial picture imitating American and European movies at their tawdriest.

I was first touted on to Güney by an architect in Ankara, an intelligent young man who seemed determined that I have a look at Turkey's best attempts at the serious film. I was vaguely aware that UMUT (HOPE), made in 1970, had played in Paris to respectable reviews, and that an occasional Güney turned up at a film festival, but none of his work has found release in either the United States or England. I was warned by some theater people in Istanbul that Güney is simply too arty to bear and that his reputation, in France at least, is as much political as aesthetic, that it depends in part on his having been jailed during the period, following the student unrest, when the country was under martial law. Too provincial to buy a knowing Istanbul opinion at the expense of an enthusiastic Ankara one (is New York always right?), I decided I had better see for myself. Although Gören and his associates were extremely apologetic about the quality of the film they showed me (my week in Istanbul, they said, was too short a time for them to find good prints of the films), they did manage to come up with UMUT and a 1971 color film ACI (BITTER).

Güney was an actor first, with a hundred or so roles to his credit (or so I was told in a display of amorphous Turkish statistics), and then a director, but his growing reputation as a serious filmmaker depends on his more recent work in which, as writer, director and leading performer, he is turning to indigenous characters and situations. There are underlying social assumptions in the films—particularly in UMUT—and both films make use of extensive speeches denouncing inequities of one kind or another. The jury at the 1972 Golden Cockerel Festival in Adana, having voted Güney best actor and his BABA (FATHER) best picture, mysteriously reversed itself before the awards could be made, presumably because of the "unfavorable reaction in government circles" reported by the semi-official Anatolia Agency. Later, Güney, like a number of other Leftist intellectuals, was put in prison. He left a half-finished film when he went to jail but, when I was in Istanbul in April, his producers were confident that he would soon be released and the film completed. By that time, martial law had given way to elections, and the expectations were that most of the writers and journalists would be released under an impending amnesty law. It passed in mid-May, but with an amendment excluding political prisoners from the general amnesty. Even so, Güney has been released, presumably on a technicality; the original charge against him was harboring revolutionaries, not expressing revolutionary sentiments. To me certainly, Güney's primary impulse seems more artistic than political, particularly if one looks at UMUT alongside a film like Sarah Maldoror's SAMBIZANGA.

UMUT, set in South Central Turkey, in and near Adana, is the story of a man and his family, whose marginal existence depends on his income as a horse-cab driver (Güney's father drove such a cab). When one of his horses is killed by an automobile and when it is clear that neither justice nor charity will prevail, the man (sensitively played by Güney) begins the slow slide into a despair in which the titular hope finally pushed him toward madness. The injustice is established neatly, visually, in a scene in which the middle-class owner of the automobile sits and has a glass of *ayran* with the police as the details of the accident are taken down, while the cabdriver, the victim of the accident, stands a respectful distance from the desk. The lack of charity is conveyed, much more conventionally, much more cornily, with standard shots of the well-to-do at poolside and trick shots, such as one in which the face of the pleading cabman is distorted in the clasp of a purse. Much more impressive is a scene in the family in which parental distress, heightened when one of the children uses bread money to buy a bicycle ride, blossoms into a mild riot of random punishment, as innocent and guilty alike are cuffed, slapped, spanked in an escalating scene that collapses finally into the father's own distaste for himself. When the film played in Paris, it was compared to THE BICYCLE THIEF—partly, I suspect, because of the plot—but the wonderfully detailed opening section of the film, the establishment of the family and their life, reminds me less of Italian neo-realism than of similar passages in a film like Ousmane Sembene's MANDABI.

The difficulty with UMUT for a non-Turkish audience is that the whole last section of the film has to do with a strange and hopeless treasure hunt—as though THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE had been spliced onto THE BICYCLE THIEF—and the immediate effect is the kind of disorientation one gets when a film switches genres abruptly midway through. Yet, the hunt is no mere metaphor. Such a search for treasure, initiated by divination, is said to be common enough in the Adana region and even occasionally successful (the treasure to be found is marketable antiquities), often enough at least to make it a tenuous hope within the film's realistic frame. Since the film early establishes its hero's superstitious longing for the surprise reward, in a scene in which he—being illiterate—must have the winning lottery numbers read for him, and since a similar scene, after the death of the horse, underlines the desperation in his hope, we are prepared for the final almost demented journey into the wild. The treasure-hunt sequences seem too extended to me, but they do finally build a power of their own and effectively carry even as doubtful a viewer as me over into the moment in which hope becomes the last terrible delusion. UMUT, for all its faults, is an impressive film.

ACI is much less interesting, although there would seem to be great potential in its initial idea. A man (Güney) returns to his native village after years in prison, for having killed a boy in a blood feud in his youth, and goes to offer himself as a substitute son to the dead boy's father. He is met, first with violence, then with hesitant acceptance, finally with love, but his old allies will not let him alone. The blood feud lives and he is seen as a traitor who must finally be punished, as he is in a scene in which the old man is killed and he is blinded. Reduced to these terms, the film could be seen as a statement about man's entrapment in antisocial social usage, but this is not an accurate description of ACI. The film is, first of all, a love story between the man and his victim's sister—sentimental for all its austerity (*v.* a scene in which the man brings a bouquet of wild flowers back after a day's work in the fields, and they are offered and accepted without words)—and, finally, a revenge drama unusual only in that the hero is blind. An inordinate amount of footage is given to the man's learning, by means of bells, to

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STRUCTURES

by Amos Vogel

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New publications useful in obvious and subtle ways to both filmmakers and filmusers are now available from the Educational Film Library Association: *Museums with Film Programs*, (a geographical list with addresses); *University and College Film Collections* (four hundred and fifteen University film libraries by state, size of collection, budget, and personnel); and *Non-Theatrical Film Distributors: Sales Service Policies* (with information on preview and sales policies of one hundred and thirty-seven companies and types of films handled). EFLA also distributes three filmographies: *Aging* (a comprehensive, critically annotated list of a hundred and thirty films for and about older people); *Alternatives* (an annotated list of a hundred and twenty films dealing with alternatives in education, life-styles, work, and religion); and *Death and Dying* (reviewing thirty-five films on the subject). They will be delighted to provide membership information and data concerning their annual American Film Festival, the definitive orgy of nontheatrical films of all categories. (EFLA, 17 West Sixtieth Street, New York, N.Y. 10023.)

The Bulletin for Film and Video Information (c/o Anthology Film Archives, 80 Wooster Street, New York, N.Y. 10012, $2 a year) is a valuable newsletter with information about independent film organizations, distribution news, grants, sample programming of regional showcases, film festivals, bibliographies (including magazine articles and special publications), and even reprints of a few articles or artists' statements. A caveat: While the information provided is first-class, it is slanted strongly toward the "formal" (structuralist? minimalist?) avant-garde with which Anthology and Mekas are concerned; other newsletters addressing themselves to "the rest" of the independent field (eighty per cent?) would be advisable.

A First Avenue Screening Room premiere: Mako Midori in Yasuzo Masumura's WAREHOUSE.

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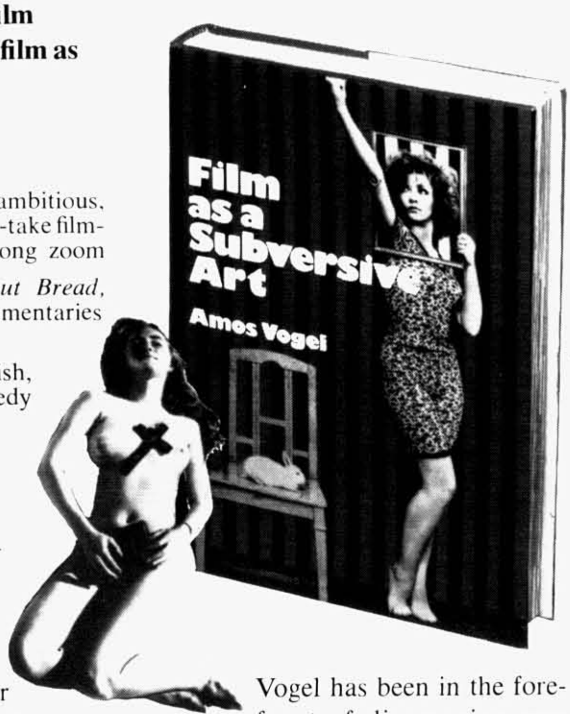

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Showcase of the Month Award: to the First Avenue Screening Room and its indefatigable sleuth-cinéaste-programmer Fabiano Canosa, who, within barely more than a year, has transformed a failing New York theater into an entirely new type of repertory theater that assiduously stays away from the usual repertory staples, stressing instead the young new talents (many as yet not well known and sorely in need of exposure) as well as neglected masterpieces by older directors or curios of the past. Consider some of the titles: Oshima's DEATH BY HANGING, Masumura's WAREHOUSE, Herzog's FATA MORGANA, Gomez' FIRST CHARGE OF THE MACHETE, Rocha's BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL, Arzner's DANCE, GIRL, DANCE, Bruck's I. F. STONE'S WEEKLY, Makavejev's MAN IS NOT A BIRD, Osheroff's DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES, Guerra's THE GUNS, Delvaux' THE MAN WHO HAD HIS HAIR CUT SHORT, Fassbinder's ALI, Mehrjui's THE COW. The emphasis here is clearly not on shorts or the American underground, but on features (at times close to the commercial area in its creative aspects), Third World films, neglected countries, social and aesthetic concerns. For sample programs, address Fabiano Canosa, First Avenue Screening Room, First Avenue at Sixty-First Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.

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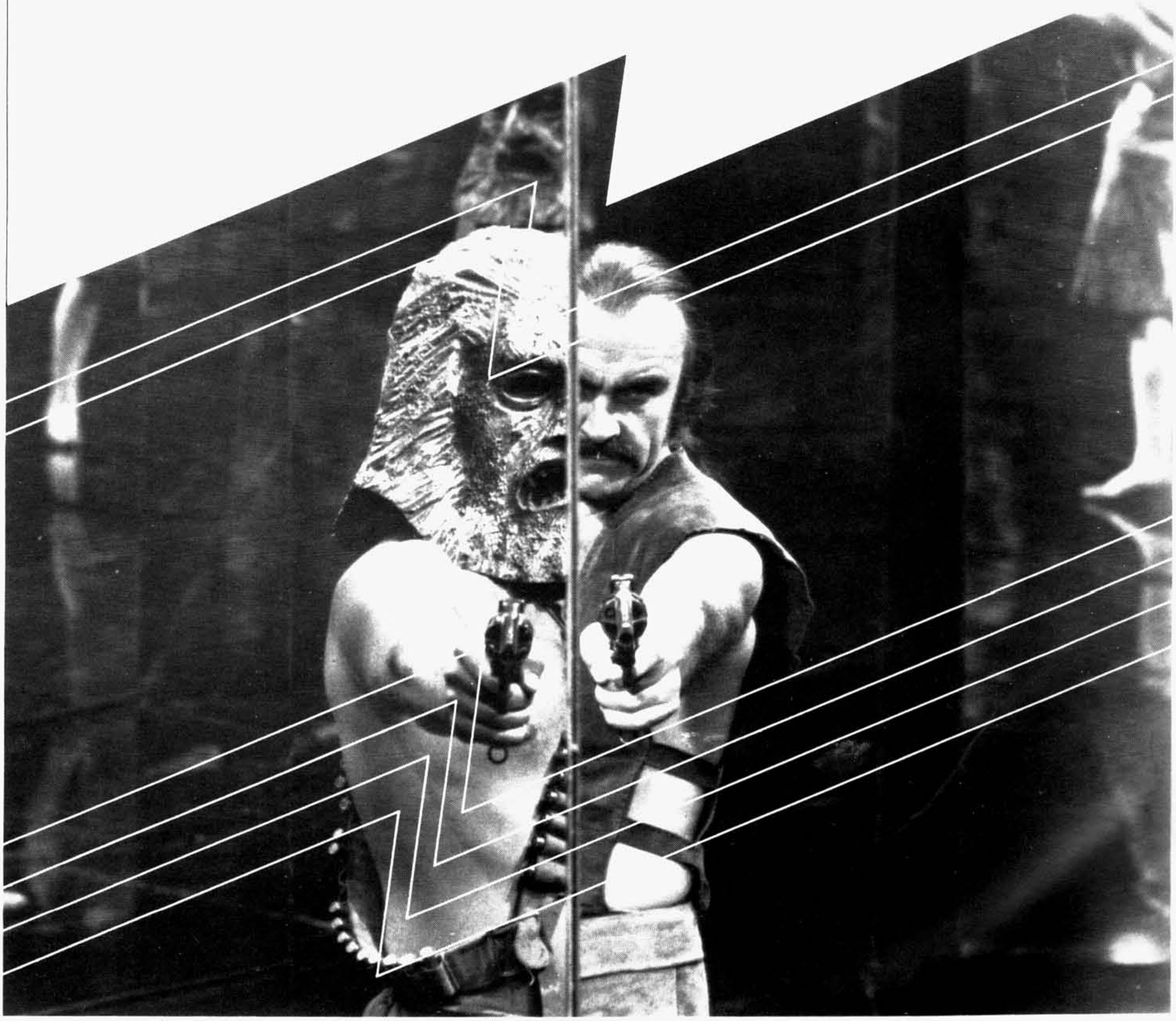

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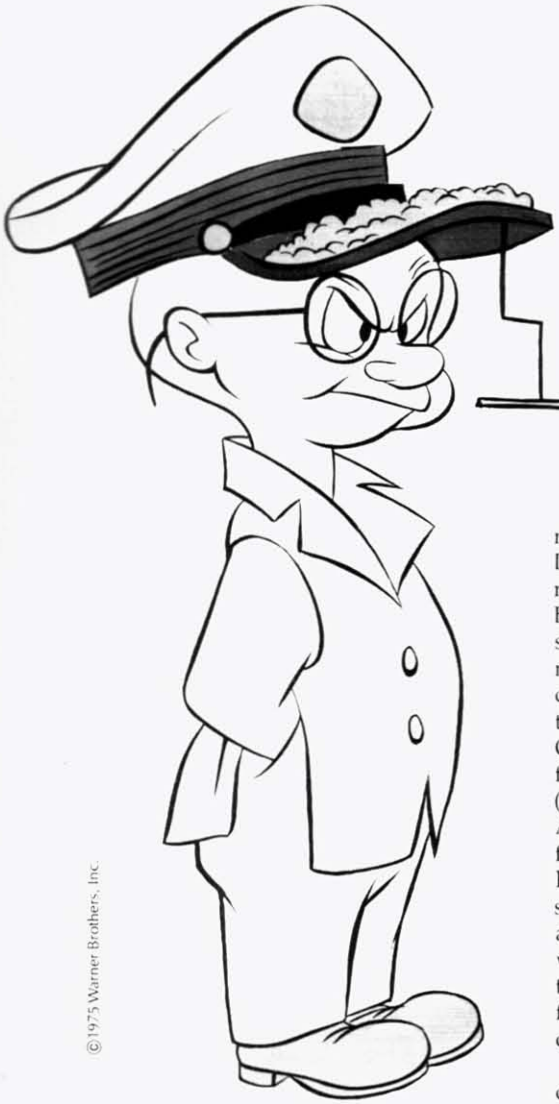

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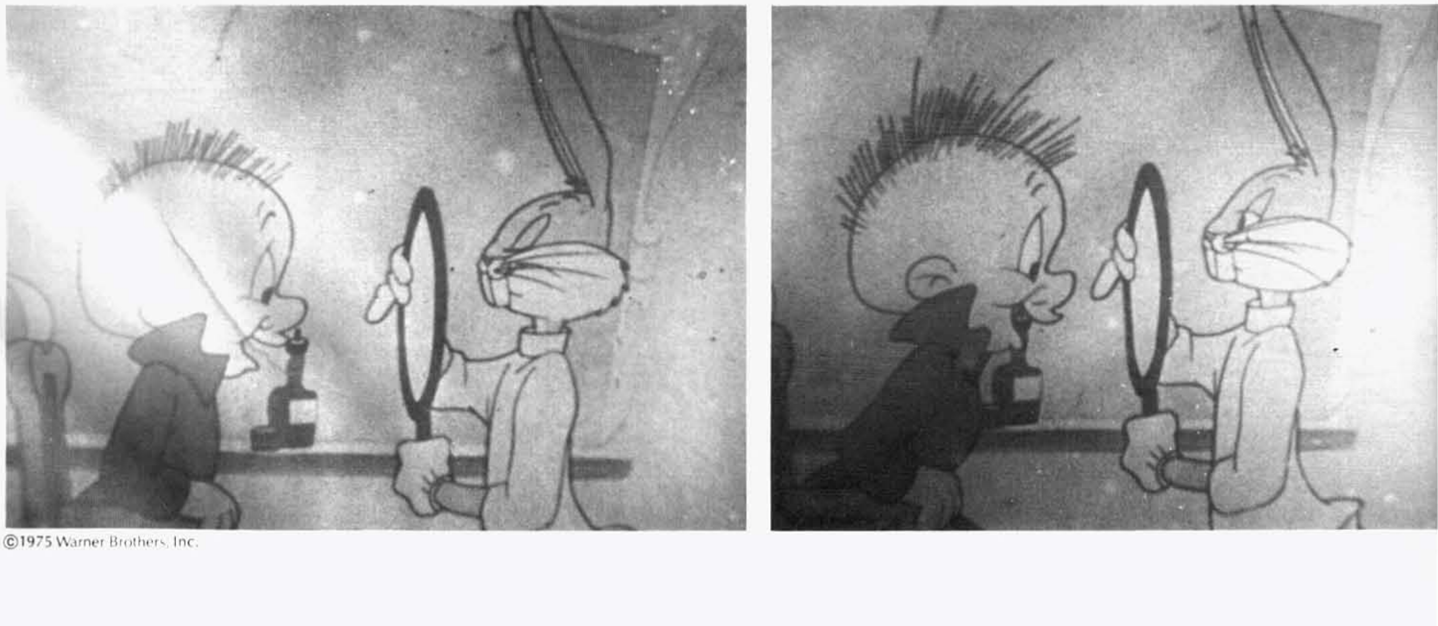
Above: Elmer Fudd as Douglas MacArthur, in Chuck Jones' BUGS' BONNETS (1956). Sequence below: in Jones' RABBIT OF SEVILLE (1950), Bugs sprinkles Figaro Fertilizer on Elmer's scalp, first to Elmer's delight, then to his dismay.

One of Bugs Bunny's fabulous subterranean burrowings leads him to the Sahara Desert, whereupon he leaps up from his rabbit-hole, yells out rejoicingly "Miami Beach at last!", and rushes off in a swimsuit over miles and miles of desert sand, finally coming upon an oasis and turning disillusioned with the piddling reservoir thereat: "I always pictured the Atlantic Ocean as much bigger." But far and away a funnier gag in Friz Freleng's SAHARA HARE (1954) is a purely visual testification to the Absurd and a gentle poke at the little fireball rabbit-hater Yosemite Sam: to dry his face, Bugs calmly pulls out the back-section of Sam's turban, yanking it down and tearing it off as though the cloth flap were perforated. Then, as a topper, the turban emits a second flap to replace the first, automatically—to make a perfect counterfeit of a paper-towel dispenser.

The gag's visual apparatus isn't especially fetching: its pyrotechnics fall short of anything spectacular (though one *does* admire the software—the savvy of the animators when it comes to their meticulous and to-the-exact-frame control—the crowning surrealist imposition being withheld just long enough to arouse attention, unloosed just soon enough to make it worth the wait). Nor can the joke be praised for any especial originality; it's undoubtedly a hand-me-down—Tex Avery, the foremost innovator at the Warner Brothers cartoon shop, treated an Ozark shirttail like a perforated paper-towel years before, in his 1938 cartoon A FEUD THERE WAS, though the screwy notion very probably dates back even farther.

The SAHARA HARE turban bit is unexceptional in itself, and of slightly over a second's duration, yet several knotty meanings could be extrapolated from it. The joke assumes additional humor, additional value, when viewed within the context of a postwar Bugs Bunny cartoon—within the welter of signifiers, visual associations and generic patterns that inform most of Bugs' films from this particular period.

For starters, one guesses the laugh is elicited by a scrambling-up of regional symbols: Sam's potentially "foreign" sheik's appurtenance simulates a towel dispenser, a banal American mechanism. And one can glean that the laugh is on Yosemite Sam from his ticked-off doubletake—the flip Bunny stays unfazed, and doesn't even notice the displacement-effect that he's instigated. One might say that the cartoonists are ridiculing Yosemite Sam for his outlandish aspiration to masquerade as a sheik, when everyone knows that Sam's bombastic disposition and fiery cusses and expletives ("You ornery fur-bearin' critter!" "You long-eared galoot!") earmark him as solely indigenous to the American West. But who was it that spruced up Sam as an outré sheik to begin with, if it wasn't the filmmakers themselves?



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BROTHERS

by Greg Ford

Ultimately, the revelation that Sam's exotic sheik's turban functions like a towel dispenser betrays the cartoonists' *own* American cultivation. It ridicules their *own* pretensions for having embarked on the tinsel desert actioner in the first place, and for having sent their rabbit skidaddling off, underground, on a three-day-leave to Miami Beach, or to Pizmo Beach, or else to the La Brea Tarpits, and for further having confounded the rabbit by making him "accidentally" caisson to the Sahara Desert, or to sunny Spain (BULLY FOR BUGS, 1953), or to the North Pole (FRIGID HARE, 1949) with the flimsiest superficial excuse that he "took the wrong turn at Albuquerque."

This was the staple premise for many a Bugs Bunny film in the late Forties and early Fifties: the scalawag rabbit unearthing himself in parts unknown, puzzling over roadmap directions, thereupon wreaking madness in some arbitrary far-off land; wreaking craziness, with a dab of the surefire comic rashness and overbearance of a U.S. Twain-type Innocent Abroad who exports with him a homebred sense of reality and misapplies it wherever he goes; wreaking craziness, and sometimes unintentionally. Perhaps the most ornate instance of suchlike sorry misapprehension transpires in MY BUNNY LIES OVER THE SEA (1948) when Bugs, with misplaced chivalry, thoroughly routs the bagpipes of an innocent Scottish bystander. He's mistaken the kilt-wearing Scot for a defenseless little old lady, the pipes for a vicious squeaking octopus.

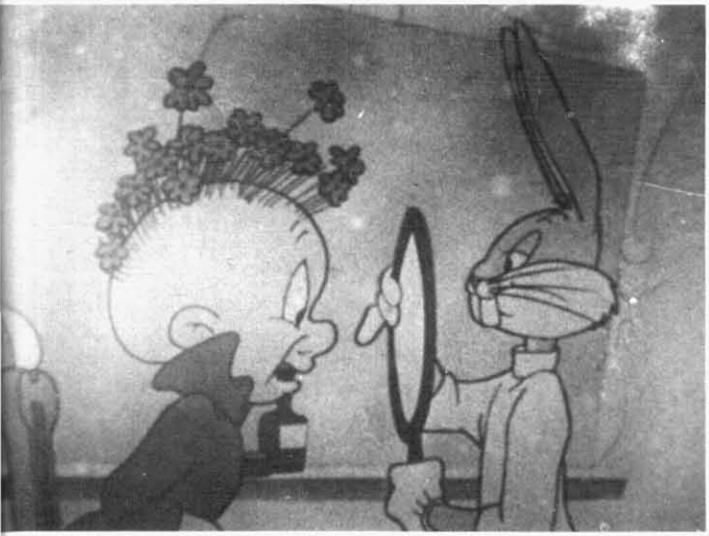
A turban aping a towel dispenser, a kilt being seen as a lady's skirt, bagpipes being mistaken for a ravenous octopus. Yet cross-cultural mishaps were by no means the only subjects for humor to be entertained in the rabbit's humorous hierarchy. Such gags, in fact, amount to just a small soupçon of the full spectrum of subjects covered in Bug's gag-spangled career. On other occasions, the Warners artists conjured joke-ideas which deliciously hit on personality—human nature, inhuman nature.

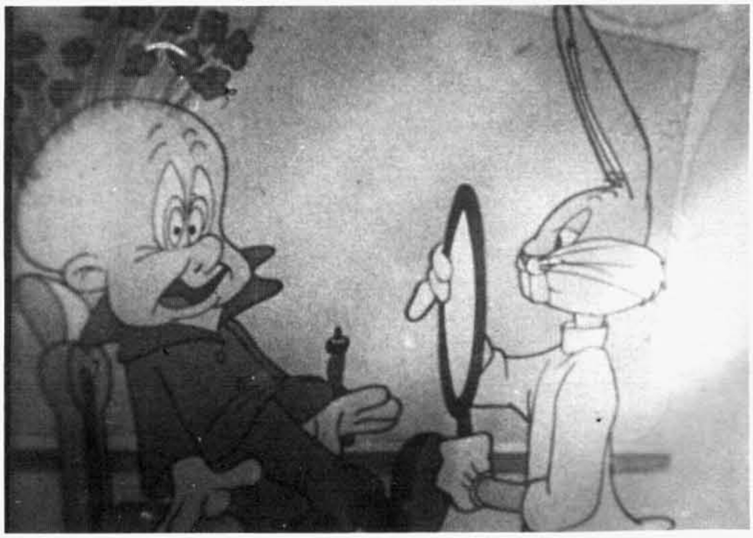
It's these jokes and their attendant delvings into Character that have even more of a sorta timeless, "universal" quality to them, as these two gags that spring to mind, from films directed by Charles M. Jones, are pips of explorations into the sick and troubled psyche of the hunter Elmer Fudd: to support an off-screen commentator's clothes-make-the-man disquisition in BUGS' BONNETS (1956), we are tendered the sight of Elmer J. in his undies and he looks, at best, like a feeble weak-kneed marshmallow; but just as soon as his hunting utensils and hunting clothes are supered over his feeble form, he powertrips neurotically, discharges his rifle and shouts out "Kill! Kill! Kill!" —turning homicidal maniac as if attempting to camouflage his truer schnook-y self (and in the same cartoon, maybe more revealingly still, Fudd dresses up as Douglas MacArthur).

There was surprisingly little levity ever levelled at Fudd's bald pate, but the baldness was as permanent a fixture in the weakling image of Elmer as was the timorous "r's"-and-"l's"-to "w's" ailment in the milksop speech of Fudd, and it must have been predestined that a note on Elmer's hairlessness crop up amid the sundry madcap haircut-shampoo-barber jokes of 1950's RABBIT OF SEVILLE (most likely the finest Rossini cartoonization ever, though a couple from studios other than Warners—namely Shamus Culhane's Woody Woodpecker THE BARBER OF SEVILLE and the opening Rossini sparrings of Tom and Jerry in Hanna-Barbera's KITTY FOILED—are also contenders for first place).

Among several dozen merry pranks that he plays on his barber-chaired victim, Bugs Bunny, to breezy orchestration, sprinkles Figaro Fertilizer on Elmer's scalp instead of any more orthodox restorative lotion stimulant, and Elmer's noggin, ever so briefly, seems to sprout real hair. Fudd lights up at this, of course, and only then do red wildflowers bloom on the fertilized hair-like stems, to the victim's shocked dismay. What's telltale, though, are those six or seven microseconds of sheer elation on Elmer's face, when he believes that he's grown actual hair. It's this brief uplift that makes his final letdown funny, and furthermore gives the tipoff that the baldness may have been bothering Elmer for lo, these many years—that it may be yet another affliction to salt the inferiority feelings that drive Fudd out, preposterously, to hunt the "wittle gway wabbit."

All I mean to elucidate, in a roundabout way, is that even the most seemingly simple or hurried-through or inadvertent visual gag, from the Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies medley of visual gags, seems to glimmer forth, when interpreted, as a gem-like condensation of wit and multilevel significaiton; that the best of these fantastic Warners sight-gags could compound whole complexities of visual mean-

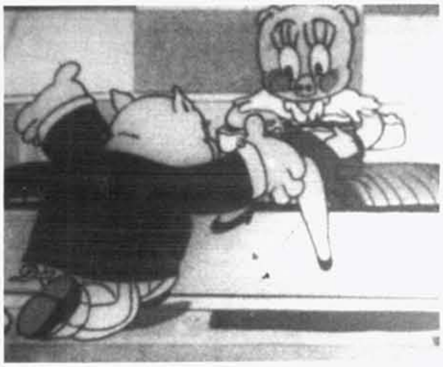


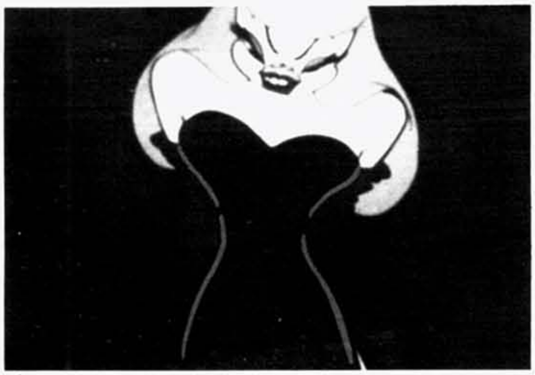


ing and visual association into absolutely the fewest number of frames; and that the Warners sight-gags, into the bargain, could surpass the live-action cavortings of even Sennett's jesters in the application of this uniquely to-the-frame preciseness and concision (since a talented animation director is able to regulate timing and composition, not to mention all the elements of the Fantastic, to an *n*th degree that nary a live-action ringmaster could ever hope to attain); and, moreover, that such seemingly effortless economy in arriving at humor and bonus meaning was open most singularly to those animators who chose to work within prescribed generic guidelines, where character concepts, story concepts, joke ideas, and space-and-movement ideas could be either held over from one cartoon to be wildly extended in the next, or else modified, or completely elided, or maybe kinkily deflected. The turban-to-towel-dispenser joke in the Freleng cartoon and the fertilized cranial flowerage joke in the Jones cartoon are quite funny in themselves, but then, in addition, are bolstered up by the audience's familiarity with Yosemite Sam and Elmer Fudd, these characters; respective dupabilities, and the waggish rabbit's customary scrimmages with each.

Yet, strangely enough, such "genre cartoons"—and by this I mean the Hollywood cartoons (y'know, all those animated short-subjects that were doled out to movie-houses of bygone years to be shown along with the major studios' live-action feature-lengthers)—by and large have been sloughed off or glossed over in fuddy-duddy fashion by our rather flatulent English-language cartoon critical histories. Printed as lately as 1967 was Ralph Stevenson's run-of-the-mill and none-too-modestly-titled softback *Animation in the Cinema* which, to its debit, does its share to nurse this most untenable condescension toward commercial Hollywood genre cartoons.

Most peeving of all, it seems to me, are Stevenson's obvious slightings, or his barely-deigned faint praises damning the "Tex Avery School," under which catchall heading he apparently subsumes Tex Avery's whole career as a cartoon director at Warner Brothers and MGM and Universal *plus* the entire directing careers of the more anchored Warners staffers Chuck Jones, Robert McKimson, and Friz Freleng, *plus* William Hanna and Joseph Barbera's direction of the Tom and Jerry's at MGM *plus*, it seems, whatever other Hollywood animation he can summon that might foster his hypotheses and premature conclusions. Offering us a good cross-section of myopic critical prejudices disguised as straightfaced data, Stevenson can only carp about "sameness" and "repetition" in the narratives of the genre cartoons. And yet he might have seen that such ritual and repetition-of-formulae can permit a director of high-calibre to work within cleanly refined areas, can allow a director the opportunity to produce most subtle variances within the ritual superstructure—variances that can be, in truth, of the keenest aesthetical order.





Above, two Tashlin courtship scenes compared: Porky and Petunia Pig's in PORKY'S ROMANCE (1937), and Jayne Mansfield and Tony Randall's in WILL SUCCESS SPOIL ROCK HUNTER (1957). Below, compare Tashlin's pigeon se-duck-tress Hatta Mari in 1944's PLANE DAFFY with Tashlin's live-action Mansfield.

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In his most remarkable paragraph (p. 62), Stevenson, in all soberness, estimates as "bad quality" *any* sample of "neo-Disney" handiwork that moves at "express speed" or harbors "caricatured animals, drawn on cels." The criteria are totally absent, though one suspects that the umbrage taken with cels is simple oversight since cel animation, after Disney, was, is, and probably forever shall be regnant, really occupying a helluva lot a ground in the animation field, including acres and acres of the most ostensibly avant-garde and experimentalist territory that Stevenson loves to travel in.

But the most persistent bugaboo that historians have grouped behind to stigmatize the Warners art is the regular plaint about violence or, rather, the "breakneck, unremitting, extreme violence"—to-do and hoopla based, I guess, on a sorely fallacious assumption that these most resilient cartoon figures ever possessed the same identical sentiency for hurt as would a flesh-and-bloodied live performer; to-do and hoopla founded on another mistaken notion that the fifty-seven varieties of splatted, squished, scrunched, or crunched-up shapes that were gotten into by the pliable figures necessarily registered pain at all—or, if pain, that it necessarily went beyond the pain-with-humiliation of a banana-peel pratfall. (Of course, the contortion was just part of the language and could be used to express an unlimited range of emotions).

Revered as posultively sacrosanct, mulled over and over in textbooks, and without a smack of smug disdain, have been the more sedate, "non-violent" graphically 2-d UPA's (Robert Cannon's GERALD McBOING BOING, etc.)' or, more to the heart of the matter, a peculiarized independent item like John Hubley's MOONBIRD, a frothy nightfall reverie wherein a little kid and his little brudder try to ensnare the somewhat over-preciously Crayola-scribbled title bird (an ostrich lookalike contest loser) and do so while consumed in tepid watery colors on some suburban lawn made up of dissolvey translucencies and transparencies. I don't want to put down Hubley's OK film; but unquestionably, as artifacts, the films that star Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tweety Sylvester, Porky Pig, Pepe Le Pew, and even Foghorn Leghorn are the more durable and readily readable hieroglyphs today and, natch, are far the more indelibly inked on a world public's collective conscious and unconscious both, while I daresay that the vaunted MOONBIRD's seepage into society has been well nigh close to nil, as the movie brings most audiences to downright yawning standstills.

But beyond this, as art, and also as Art, the darling gibberings-gurglings of these kids in their MOONBIRD-questing (all the

Character's on the soundtrack) plainly lack the psychological crispness-clarity of, say, the facial expressions etched by Jones on the irked or befuddled countenance of his frazzled scrawny Coyote, after another one of his flubbed-up stabs at catching up with the Roadrunner: the wearied beastie's piqued or perplexed gander-takings when one of his intricate Roadrunner-snaring gizmos goes kaflooey and comes to naught; or his drop-mouthed gog-eyed "Egad!" look at the bird's flabberghasting gusty speed (speed quite often replete with all the after-effects of eddied dust clouds, dredged-up cacti, tiny wafted scraps of paper). My guess, without intending too much anti-intellectual slaver, is that the most erudite animation cognescenti today are non-writing, supposed-to-be-traumatized young and adult who turn their TV's on at certain times, and might wait patiently through nettling marathon toy-or-hamburger commercials, or the harangues of dippy tot-show-host emcees, on the slim offchance of finally getting a six-or-seven minute masterwork by Tex Avery, Robert Clampett, Jones, or Freleng. Manny Farber's old remark from a 1943 *New Republic* article on Looney Tunes-Merrie Melodies is probably still admissable: "The surprising facts about them are that the good ones are masterpieces and the bad ones aren't a total loss."

The total thousand-title-or-so output of films, from 1930 to 1963, should be sifted through, as one reaps many troves and little dross—with special attention given to the following talented confluence of animation directors and their rarely-cumbrous styles:

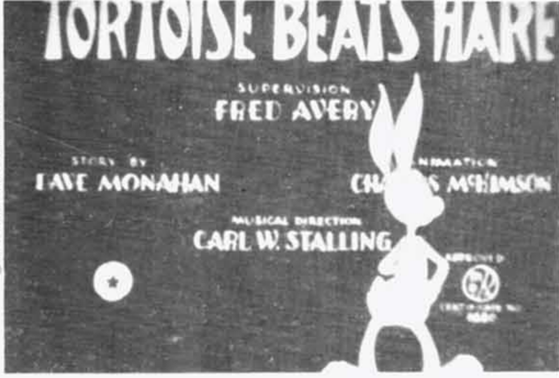
1) Frank Tashlin—whose Warners cartoons compare and contrast fascinatingly with his later feature comedies.

2) Tex Avery—whose recognition of animation's potential for absurdism and abstraction led him irrefutably to the discovery of Bugs Bunny in 1940's A WILD HARE, and Daffy Duck in 1937's PORKY'S DUCK HUNT (where Daffy goes off on conniption-fitting tangents and ululates "woo-woo!" into the Deep Focus of the lake horizon-line—but the best moment of PORKY'S DUCK HUNT is inexplicably lyrical: carousingly drunken trout row-boating by and singing "Moonlight Bay") and, just as importantly, in his many mock-documentaries and mock-travelogues at Warner Brothers from 1936 to 1942, most of the rudiments for the astonishingly rapid-paced style of his later films at MGM from '42 to '55, which partook of even more absurd hyperbole.

3) Robert Clampett—in whose madness there was even less method than in Avery's, and whose most undisciplined sproinging rubbery character-motion gave him some of the most eminently stretchable-bendable characters in Cartoon History, and whose anything-for-a-laugh temperament prophesized today's Sick or Black Humor: there's the notorious iron lung routine in 1940's DAFFY DOC (in which the berserk quack-doctor Daffy also treats an operating-room respirator like a punching-bag, and attempts surgery with a rusty saw), the death agony in 1943's CORNY CONCERTO, his kooky lampooning of FANTASIA (so that Bugs Bunny and Porky Pig stagger about the Vienna Woods in death throes accompanied by a Strauss waltz), or the equally gruesome death agony of Daffy Duck in 1942's WISE-QUACKING DUCK (when Daffy tucks his head inside his ring-necked collar, spurts out ketchup from a bottle and makes like decapitation), senility in 1944's OLD GRAY HARE (with a doddering Rip Van Winkle Elmer and an arthritic Bugs Bunny still at odds in the year 2000), mass murder in 1944's GREAT PIGGY BANK ROBBERY (so that Daffy Duck can machine-gun down a closet-full of Dick Tracy characters, and the bullet-riddled corpses of Double Header, Snake-Eyes, Picklepuss, etc., can topple out like a row of dominos—leaving only Neon Noodle, an electrical neon outline, whom Daffy promptly lassoes into a flashing EAT AT JOE's marquee), and even, momentarily, homosexuality in 1941's WHAT'S COOKING DOC? (where Bugs Bunny's coveted Oscar trophy abruptly comes to life and does a little gay sashay).

4) Robert McKimson—formerly Bob Clampett's top animator, and whose early work, from 1944, captures some of Clampett's initial raw, anarchic energy in reckless films such as DAFFY DOODLES (where Daffy fiendishly paint-brushes moustaches on every billboard in Manhattan), GORILLA MY DREAMS (where Bugs Bunny and a simian go vine-swinging from tree to tree through the Bingzi-Bangzi jungle), and whose early Foghorn Leghorn films (1944's WALKY TALKY HAWKY, 1947's CROWING PAINS) contain some wonderfully reckless limbs-thrashing-every-whichaway movement, as Henery Hawk is never allowed to get a word in edgewise over the very boisterous babblings-on of the Southern blowhard rooster (" . . .that boy's about as sharp as a bowling-ball").

5) Friz Freleng—who had the longest tenure of any director at Warner Brothers, and who was to use his early expertise at musical synchronization. learned from his pioneering direction of the early Merrie Melodies, and developed it into something like a personal theme in the Forties and the Fifties, cementing, brick-laying, and riveting up an entire building to the music of Lizst's Second Hungarian Rhapsody in 1941's RHAPSODY IN RIVETS, playing out the old-timey nursery-rhyme of "The Three Little Pigs," ballet-style, to Brahm's Hungarian Dances in his 1944 PIGS IN A POLKA and, quite often, utilizing his musical aplomb to present Bugs Bunny as a hoofer, in 1945's STAGE DOOR CARTOON, and once again in 1957's SHOW-BIZ BUNNY, where the song-and-dance man Daffy Duck tries to



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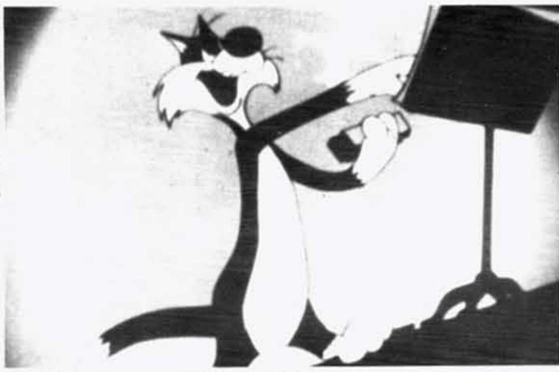
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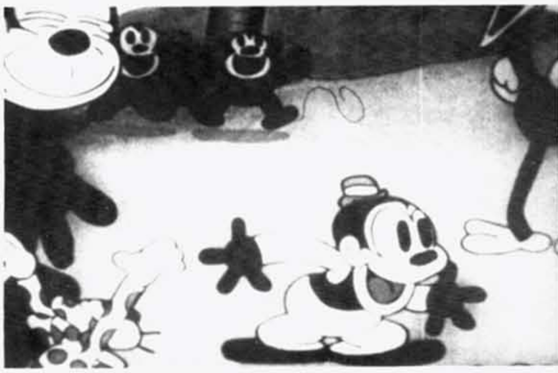
The elaborate caterwaulings of Sylvester: one of his finest performances in Friz Freleng's BACK ALLEY OPROAR (1947).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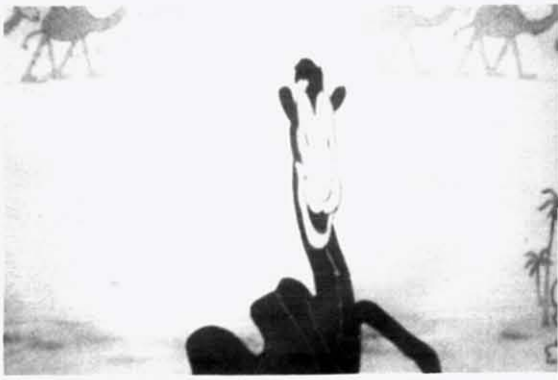
Bosko at oneness with nature, surrounded by the smiling jungle animals of CONGO JAZZ (1930).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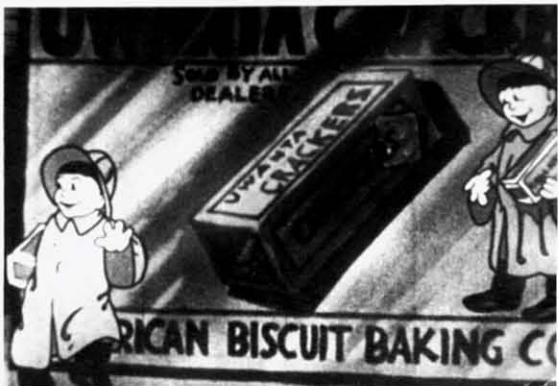
Porky's camel hallucinates other camels in Robert Clampett's PORKY IN EGYPT (1937).



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Grocery store labels spring to life in typical early Merrie Melodies manner in Freleng's HOW DO I KNOW IT'S SUNDAY? (1934).

upstage Bugs and crab his act.

6. Chuck Jones, who did so much to refine and construct the characters of Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Daffy and the others into the finalized versions by which they are popularly known today, and gave us the Roadrunner besides.

It's left to be said that each of these artists quite likely deserves a "special animation issue" unto himself.

One need merely flit a glint at Mickey Mouse as "Willie" steering-wheeling at his steamboat helm—his feet solidly planted while his white two-buttoned breeched midriff capers left-right, gingered up, to mark the beats of the music—to appreciate that, from the outset, the Warner Brothers character ilk benefited from Disney's tutelage (though a tandem causal condition—the less rigidified production system, the willingness and initiative of the separate units—determined that the Warners' directors later would supercede the Disneylanders with the cliching niches of their storylines' more adult preoccupations, their regular players' more grown-up characterizations, and their more shrewd retrieval of a smattering of the pre-classical pre-Disney zaniness to overlay the Disneylanders' first-simplified, then-impeccable, then-increasingly-creakily "realistic" animation).

Though Disney's early menagerie might seem eclipsed by the later Warners morons-imbeciles-wiseacres, Mickey the Mouse and his simplified, musically- synchronized shenanigans just must have paved the way for the first of the Warner Brothers chaps: Bosko, appearing in the first of the Warners cartoons, a Looney Tune, SINKING IN THE BATHTUB (1930). In STEAMBOAT WILLIE, Mickey Mouse organ-grinds a billy-goat's tail for organ-grinder's music; in SINKING, Bosko, putt-putting along in his car, cranks the tail of a cow-in-the-road to raise her up like a tollgate—the cow resents it and marches off insultedly, her udders swinging to-fro to "Pomp and Circumstance." Tight sound-and-image synchronization is the crux of the whole shebang, as Bosko blithely forest-trips and beckons us to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

A. Avery's RED HOT RIDING HOOD (1943), at MGM, picturing pert pin-up Red and the wolfish wolf in oddly demure postures: usually, Red does a hot-and-flirty nightclub dance, saucily animated by Preston Blair, while the wolf illustrates his lupine appetites with wild, wild reaction-shots, cross-cut with the tantalizing dance: like some whirligig erogenous zone, he might whistle, stomp his feet, set in motion a Rube Goldberg hand-clapping machine, or his eyeballs might unsocket themselves for mid-air ogling at the dish, his body maybe crackle itself into tiny flakes, send itself to the ceiling, or go through other unspeakable palpitating gyrations spoken of later in this issue. Most of the comedy is milked, though, from the delicacy of the crosscutting between the lady's smooth nubility in the dance, and the skittish strenuous helter-skelter of the wolf's impossibly overstimulated responses. The widespread theory that these most healthy lecherous acrobatics were incurred *solely* for the enjoyment of WWII servicemen is obviously a moot issue, though a partly-corroborative image occurs in THE SHOOTING OF DAN MCGOO (1945): during one protracted wolf-whistle, the wolf's body, turned erectile, has Army, Navy and Marine uniforms zapped over it. By the by, the first of Avery's ever-unsated masher-type wolves was whelped at Warners, in 1937's LITTLE RED WALKING HOOD, first displayed "lurking in a nearby poolhall," as the narrator sez, but the Red Riding Hood co-starred here, a little sprite, bears only incidental resemblance to Preston Blair's perter, suppler dame of the later MGM "Red Riding Hood" spoofs. Generally speaking, all the sexily updated poems and fairy-tales that Avery directed at MGM were antedated by more subdued Warner Brothers "pilot" versions: his sassy SWINGSHIFT CINDERELLA (1945) was forerun by CINDERELLA MEETS A FELLA (1938), and his drastic ridiculing of the purplest similes—metaphors in Service's Yukon poem in THE SHOOTING OF DAN MCGOO (1945) was looked forward to by his 1939 Warners film DANGEROUS DAN MCFOO.

Other well-known cartoon depictions of sex should get capsulized mention here: there's that famous-but-most-unfunny ancient unsigned porno relic from the 1920's entitled BURIED TREASURE (included in the recent sex-compendium HISTORY OF THE BLUE MOVIE) and featuring a roughly-sketched homunculus who carts his titanic cock about in a wheelbarrow in some dopey anti-Eden garden. In a different class altogether are the naive and primitive boop-boop-a-doops of the Fleischers' pre-Hays flapper, discussed elsewhere in this issue. Chuck Jones' only cartoon series dedicated to sex-frustration were the films that starred the aromatic Pepe Le Pew—a Parisian skunk as much amorous as malodorous, and whose hoppy, mistaken love-pursuits of a female cat caused neverending mating difficulties: here the humor stemmed from the female cat's distraught refusals of the smelly advances, from her terrified expressions, swats at the skunk, and quick getaways—but all of this was optimistically counterbalanced by Pepe's cavalier comebacks, by his Charles Boyer-or Maurice Chevalier-type suaveté and, even in the face of countless brushoffs by the cat, his mandatory retention of his self-assured franglais asides to the viewer ("Luff weel find a way"). Also at Warners, Robert Clampett directed a very funny piece called BACALL TO ARMS (1946), in which an Averyesque wolf frequents a movie theatre and there gets erotically enflamed—this time not fuelled by the typical chantoosie, but first by a cutie usherette, and next by the movie-screen vision of Lauren Bacall (here rechristened "Laurie Bee-Cool"). Clampett, seeming to specialize in nightmares, dreams and hallucinations, now comes to grips with the Hollywood Dream Machine, as the wolf is all but burnt to a cinder in his symbiotic involvement with the Bacall-Bogart "Anybody got a light?" sequence from TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT. Along the way, Clampett also proves that animated cartoons can criticize live-action cinema as concretely as does the written word: in BACALL TO ARMS, the coy innuendoes and the wry, snide witticisms of the Howard Hawks film are sabotaged by the wolf's ruder, more redhot reprisals to them (he blows his top, twirls a party noisemaker). In *Time Magazine*, Agee described Bacall as "hot as blazes" and quipped that she "has cinema personality to burn and burns both ends against an unusually little middle," and Robert Clampett uses similar incendiary imagery in his cartoon, as the wolf fantasizes Bogart tossing an Army Surplus flame-thrower to Bacall (instead of the famous tossed book of matches) and as the wolf imagines Bacall's sultry tread across the room igniting a minor conflagration, a little ribbon-stream of flames (extinguished to the last sputter by a hopped-up Smokey Stover brigade that instantaneously zings on-scene).

B. Droopy, roped up, in his first screen role in Tex Avery's MGM DUMB-HOUNDED (1943): this film, and the slightly more exaggerated NORTHWEST HOUNDED POLICE (1946), concern the vivesectional phobic "take's" of the escaped-convict wolf whenever he lays his enlarged or out-poppable eyes on the seemingly inescapable dog. The wolf character would traverse entire continents to shake off Droopy, yet would always find the impassive basset waiting for him on the other side. In the jarring conclusion of NORTHWEST HOUNDED, the wolf, once more placed behind bars, wonders aloud if "there could've been more than one of those little guys," and Avery zip-pans to an unnerving shot of a hallway aisle littered with mountie Droopys, who chorus in unison "Hmmm, could be," a pet Avery one-liner. This magically multipliable or ubiquitous character concept was introduced in Avery's Warners film TORTOISE BEATS HARE (1940), where Bugs Bunny is rendered paranoid by a plethora of turtles.

C. Tex Avery's self-portrait model sheet.

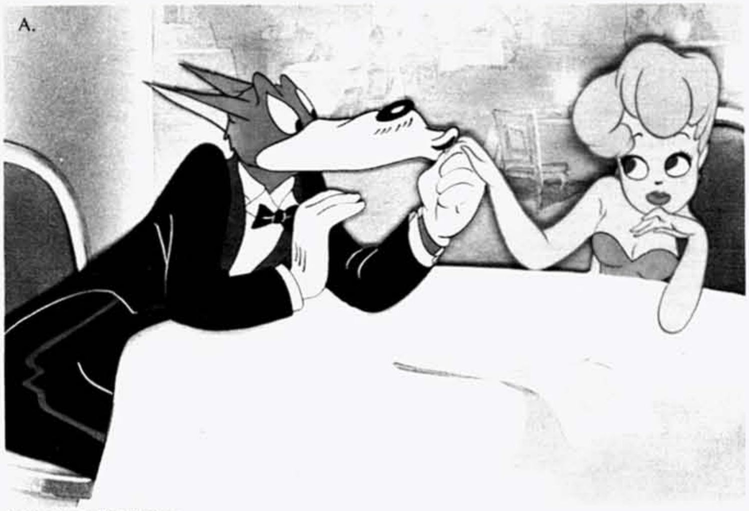
D. A cartoon-within-a-cartoon: Porky animates his own stick-figured drawings in PORKY'S PREVIEW (1940) at Warners, one of Avery's many flagrant jokes upon his audience.

E. Avery's Egghead, an Elmer Fudd prototype with a bigger proboscis and more enigmatic motivations: cast as Prince Chow Mein in Warner Brothers' CINDERELLA MEETS A FELLA (1938), Egghead finds his dreamboat Cinderella waving to him from the theater's tenth row. The "shadow character" silhouette (supposedly of a "real" audience-member) was one of Avery's best devices to annihilate the formal strictures of the frame (in other cases, Bugs Bunny, say, might walk in front of the credits and read them aloud, mispronouncing the names—"Fred Ah-vahr'-ee"). Actually, the "shadow character" silhouette was simply a rotoscoped version of Warners storyman Tedd Pierce, who gave his most assiduously drawn-out performance in DAFFY DUCK AND EGGHEAD (1937), where, shot in cold blood by one of the screen's cartoon characters, he does a lengthy fall to death (and DAFFY DUCK AND EGGHEAD is graced with a splendid opening: the two walnutty principals are shown leaping from two separate walnut shells). Avery's many masterful innovations in distancing his subject-matter—as well as the very processes of the cartoon medium—were well exploited by other directors at Warner Brothers, notably by Chuck Jones in the incomparable DUCK AMUCK (which, among other things, puts to the question the animator's possibly sadistic control over the frame—puts to the question the animator's thumbs-up, thumbs-down Emperor's Rule over his cartoon subjects) and in the delightful HARE TONIC (1945) in which Jones and Bugs Bunny, in cahoots, persuade the audience that it's contracted the dreaded disease "Rabbititus" by swirling red and yellow spots on the screen.

F. From Tex (Fred) Avery's touchstone Bugs Bunny film A WILD HARE (1940): a "guess-who" game. Elmer ventures, "Wosemawy Wane? Pwissiwa Wane?" How is a character born? The chunkier rabbit in PORKY'S HARE HUNT (1936), directed by Ben Hardaway, proclaims "Of course, you know, this means war!," but he proclaims it in a scatter-brained way, and it was up to director Chuck Jones to stipulate that the line become the moral fulcrum to the later Bugs stories. It was Ben "Bugs" Hardaway who gave the Bunny his moniker, but it was up to Tex Avery to first prove that the moniker was a misnomer and that Bugs wasn't buggy or batty at all, but was a character with much mental wherewithal. Facing a gun-carrying hunter, Bugs Bunny in A WILD HARE first delivers his crucial scarcely-importuned catchline "What's Up Doc?," and several other groundrules for the Bugs-Elmer tussles were established in this film, character-building precepts that were hewn to by the other Warners directors: Bugs' cautious testing-out of the situation with his gloved hand, before spinning out of his rabbit-hole and into sight at last (in Freleng's 1942 FRESH HARE, set in snowy Canada, the gloved hand appears from the hole and goes through the same routine, only this time around, wearing little finger-sized snowshoes) and, of course, Bugs' habit of planting kisses on Elmer's forehead, here revealing not just Bugs' insouciance, but also his genuine awe and affection for Elmer's seemingly limitless insipidity. After A WILD HARE, only a few changes were left to be made in Bugs' character-shape (i.e. the Bunny's squattier bow-legs in this cartoon had yet to be straightened out).

G. Here spicing each other with salt and pepper, two famished buzzards struggle to devour one another throughout the course of Avery's most libidinous MGM film WHAT'S BUZZIN' BUZZARD? (1943): to put the viewer in a properly carnivorous frame-of-mind, Avery, at the beginning, inserts a live-action photo of a steak, dripping with gravy.

A.



COURTESY PAUL TRENT

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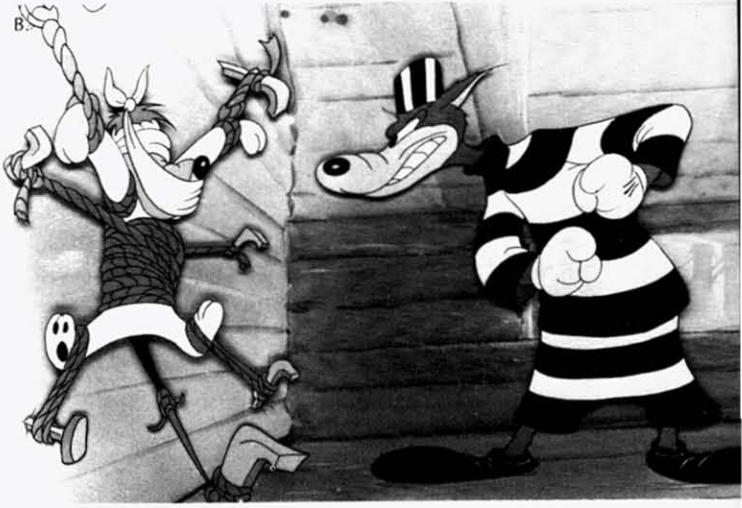

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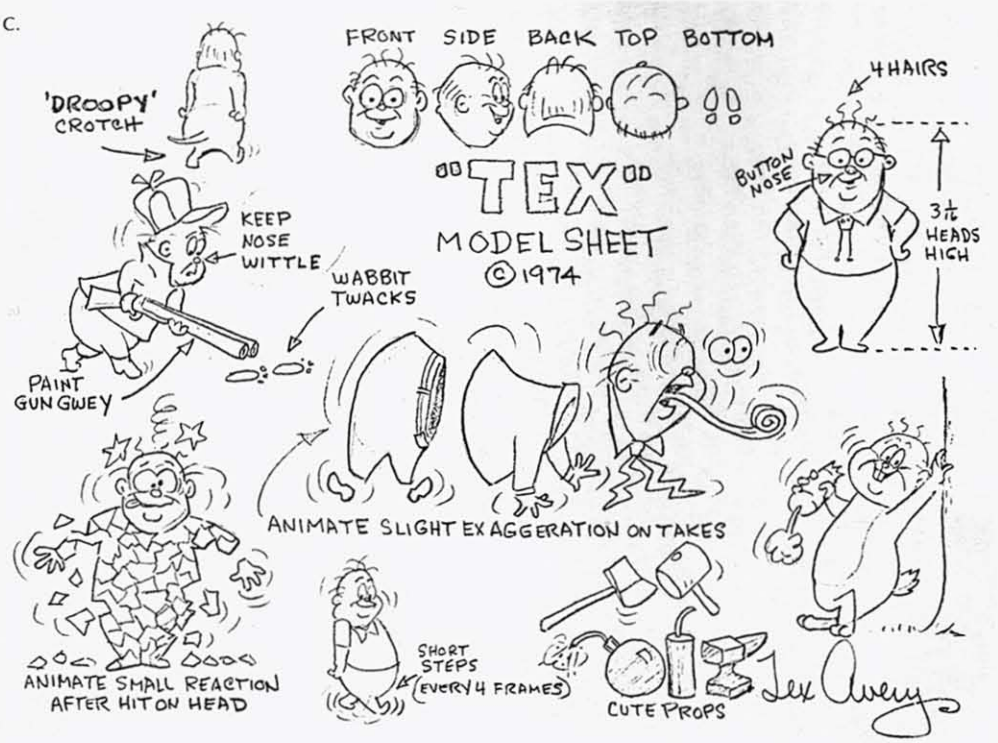
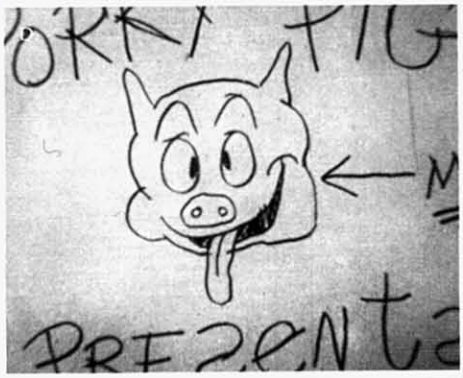

FRONT SIDE BACK TOP BOTTOM
'DROOPY' CROTCH
4 HAIRS
"TEX"
MODEL SHEET
©1974
BUTTON NOSE
3½ HEADS HIGH
KEEP NOSE WITTLE
WABBIT TWACKS
PAINT GUN GWEY
ANIMATE SLIGHT EXAGGERATION ON TAKES
ANIMATE SMALL REACTION AFTER HIT ON HEAD
SHORT STEPS (EVERY 4 FRAMES)
CUTE PROPS
Tex Avery

D.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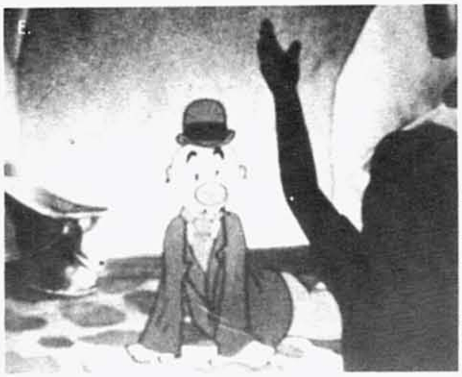

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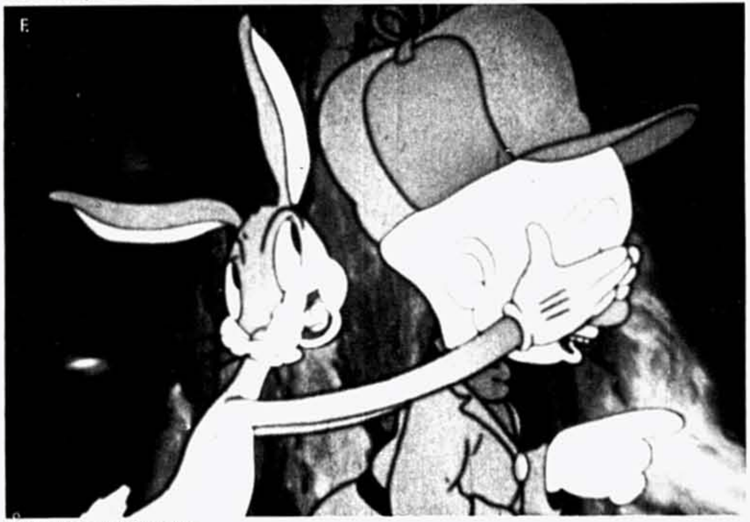

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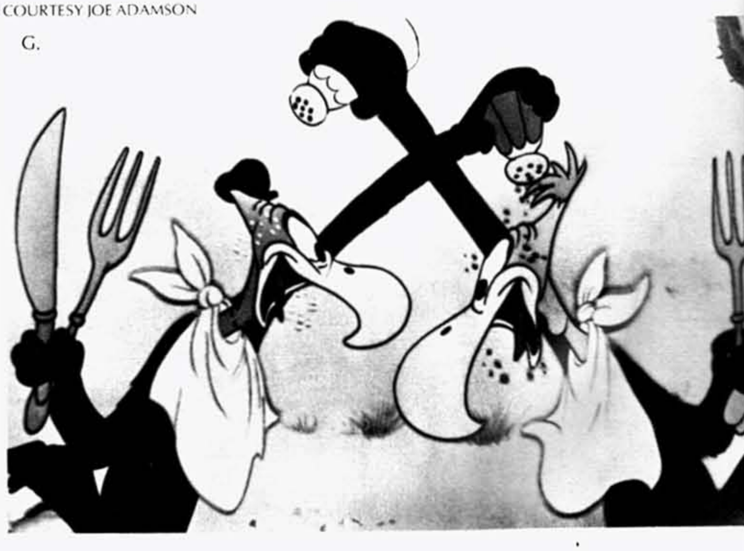

WARNER BROTHERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

"Tiptoe Through the Tulips" with him. But the prize-winning gig is Bosko's sax-blowing of soap bubbles ("I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles"), with Bosko's heartthrob Honey daintily staircasing the bubbles down from her second-story window as her dance-steps splish every bubble to correspond with the ditty's every note. (This serenade-scene compares favorably to many such musical-skits from the same season's Mickey Mice.)

Hugh Harman and Rudolf Ising (Harman-Ising—"harmonizing," understand?) created these "Boskos" with Isodore Freleng (the selfsame Friz) as the chief animator. The three of 'em were formerly Disney personnel and their derbied Bosko (the Negro) was a black-dot-inkblot specimen like a Mickey the Mouse *sans* mouse-ears—or like Flip the Frog or Oswald the Rabbit, other charmers co-masterminded or masterminded with Ub Iwerks somewhere around. But Bosko's squeaky, sometimes-e'en-tremolo falsetto was, if anything, more guileless than the Mouse's. Bosko was a guileless paragon, his picaresque adventurings defiant of exegesis—except for the comment that whether he was dabbling in free-enterprises (BOSKO'S STORE, BOSKO'S SODA FOUNTAIN, 1932), proudly waxing a souped-up race-car (BOSKO THE SPEED-KING, 1933), chasing butterflies (TREES' KNEES, 1931) or in a dogsled mushing pipsqueak huskies through a blizzard over the simplest-drawn hump-shaped knolls (BIG MAN FROM THE NORTH, 1931), Bosko had a kinda simplified oneness with the unarrayed world about him, an espoused philosophy sloganized by the catchphrase AIN'T NATURE GRAND? (1930).

Harman-Ising departed from Warners and packed off Bosko with them to MGM, where they alchemized their first-ambiguous ink-splotch into a much more complicated but less appealing Bosko—a fully-colored beige-mulatto cuteso-kiddo stereotype. Meantime, Warners' Looney Tunes were left to schlep along with Buddy, a caucasian Xerox of the original Bosko and pretty pallid and pale at that (though Freleng's 1934 BUDDY THE GOB, Orientally-swung, undulates well to "Shanghai Lil"). Fortunately, Harman-Ising also had decreed a Merrie Melodies legacy before they left (among their early Melodies, the 1932 THREE'S A CROWD, reportedly initiating the books-coming-to-life schemata). The vintage Merrie Melodies of the middle Thirties, furthered mainly under Freleng's direction, proved to be less aesthetically perishable than the "Buddys." The mild smiles that are inspirated by these Melodies might seem tame or lame next to the far-flung guffaws encouraged by all the post-Avery manicness—the acumen behind this fluid sinuous motion maybe seeming less pronounced than that behind the Forties' later lurched-tempoed, hastened motion. But charm is there in 1934's POP GOES YOUR HEART (tugs-of-war betwixt worms and baby robins, a woods-pillaging bear villain, pond-side lily-pad leap-frogs doing "boom, boom, boom, boom!" *continuos* to the all-important carolling of the title-song); 1936's LET IT BE ME (in "Birdville," moralizing over some starstruck local-yokel hen); 1936's I'M A LITTLE BIG SHOT ("Birdville's" other-side-of-the-tracks: a bank-robbing jay); 1937's STEAMLINE GRETA GREEN (in "Carville" yet, with anthropomorphized automobiles, where typifying establishing-shots are to colonize the denizens of Bugville-Chickville-Carville at some down-home township mixer, pub, or jamboree, and the dances there are mechanically, but uniformly well-propelled. (A favorite early Melodies dance from Freleng's 1937 spiritualist extravaganza CLEAN PASTURES: a supercilious sidewalk tap of a very natty spade to flout a Stepinfetchit angel who has been commissioned by Pair-O-Dice to round up Harlem souls.)

The continuous motion generally assimilates or merges any didacticism present in these flowing mini-musicals, and the films are seldom saccharine. The litmus if not the acid test is Freleng's first-in-color BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1934) by dint of its potentially cloying little girlchild sleepyhead who's Sandmanned off to toy dreamland; it's a damn scary dream, as it happens, induced by gluttonous overeating of mixed bananas and chocolates. Also germinative, one of the color Melodies could chance upon a character who was positively foolish enough to belly out the negatively blasé Buddy and become, thereafter, the pudgy star of the studio's parallel-running series of b&w Looney Tunes: in HAVEN'T GOT A HAT (1935), the fat child hog Porky, fraught with stammers-stutters through his faltering overlong show-and-tell of "Midnight Ride of Paul Revere," is the least endearing schoolhouse dunce with classmates such as the mischievous Beans, Ham and Ex (cute twin pups), a pianist Oliver Owl and a scared kitten quakily show-and-telling "Mary's Little Lamb."

Most regaling, though, are those SKELETON DANCE-like Melodies where clotheslined ladies' underwear shimmies, Jello quivers, bodyless men's pajamas bongo tree-stumps with their trap-door rears. Or those in which grocery trademarks-brandnames spring to song-and-movement like the snazzy HOW DO I KNOW IT'S SUNDAY? (1934), where Dutch Cleanser labels wooden-shoe dance, Uwanta Biscuit insignias participate, tamales fandango, lobsters and clamshells castenet, the umbrella-toting tootsie from the Morton Salt container can get rightly soaked by a downpour deluge from a box of Threaded Wheat (the unavoidable accompaniment: "By A Waterfall"). And there are fitful startles: some flies abruptly cossack-step after nibbling Russian Rye, and one of them gets kayoed by a downswung Harm-and-Ammer mallet, as does the feline villain of the 1935 BILLBOARD FROLICS, who also is tormented by the RCA Victrola dog and plagued by the police squadron called for by the Phillip Morris pageboy.

The 1937 doozy SPEAKING OF THE WEATHER gives the same workout to a magazine-rack, so that "Crime Stories" fugitives are persued by "Boy's Life" do-gooders, by siren-ing "Police Gazette" cop-cars, and are sentenced to Life (Magazine). It's revealing that this cartoon should be *auteur'd* by Frank Tashlin, whose live-action feature satires, it's been noted, abound in suchlike cultural-punning and topical relevancies. The Disney studio came to draw a blank on what the Warners artists never forgot: that even the most lavishly mythical cartoon could still quite nicely keep abreast of topicalities. (Even in Jones' sumptuously Wagnerian WHAT'S OPERA, DOC?, the capping anathema imprecated by a teutonic Elmer Fudd to smite a Brünhilde Bugs Bunny is "Smog!," a modern pestilence.)

In Tashlin's b&w PORKY'S RAILROAD (1937), Porky's spasmodically slowpoke locomotive (headin' for the last round-house), arduously huff-puffing uphill, is outrun by a snail, predicting a quite cartoon-y gag in Tashlin's Sixties DISORDERLY ORDERLY when a real-life spastic, Jerry Lewis, himself is outrun by a snail. All the rib-tickling over consumerism-commercialism in his pretty-brilliant comedy-cum-social-critique of the middle Fifties, WILL SUCCESS SPOIL ROCK HUNTER?, is foreshadowed by the comparable courtship folly of PORKY'S ROMANCE (1937). Adman Tony Randall proposes to puckered-lipped Jayne Mansfield in dehumanizing padded equipage so to cinch her endorsement of his Stay-Put lipstick merchandise; in the cartoon, Porky stutters proposals to Petunia Pig (a Tashlin-invented sow), while she is more enrapt with the "Chewie Gooey" candies and the flowers that he's brought to her. (The depersonalizing salespitch in the florist's store window: "A Posey to Please Every Nosey.") Without a doubt, Petunia Pig is a Jayne Mansfield-progenitor but a much more taking-aback resemblance to the over-shapely Mansfield is discovered in the curvaceous design of the top-heavy Nazi pigeon se-duck-tress Hatta Mari in the rousing Tashlin "propaganda" cartoon PLANE DAFFY (1944), in which Daffy and his carrier-pigeon confrères forlornly cancel out the names of every pigeon-flyer torched by wicked Hatta—an indubitable visual-and-story quotation of DAWN PATROL.

Anyone admiring the devastating *amour fou* of Tashlin's live-action farce THE LIEUTENANT WORE SKIRTS, where Sheree North and Tom Ewell smutch each other

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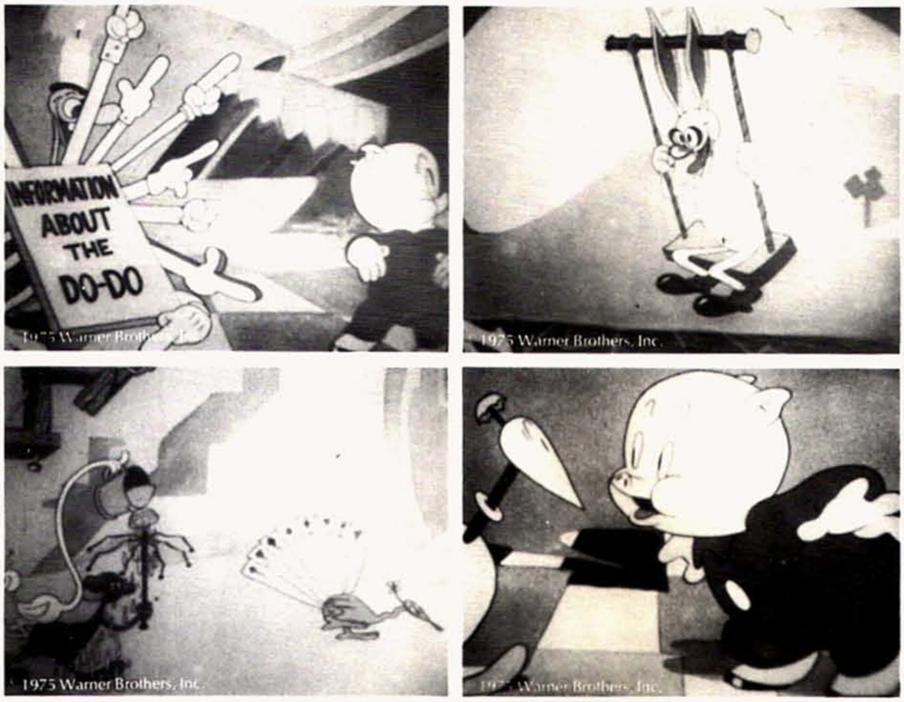
INFORMATION ABOUT THE DO-DO
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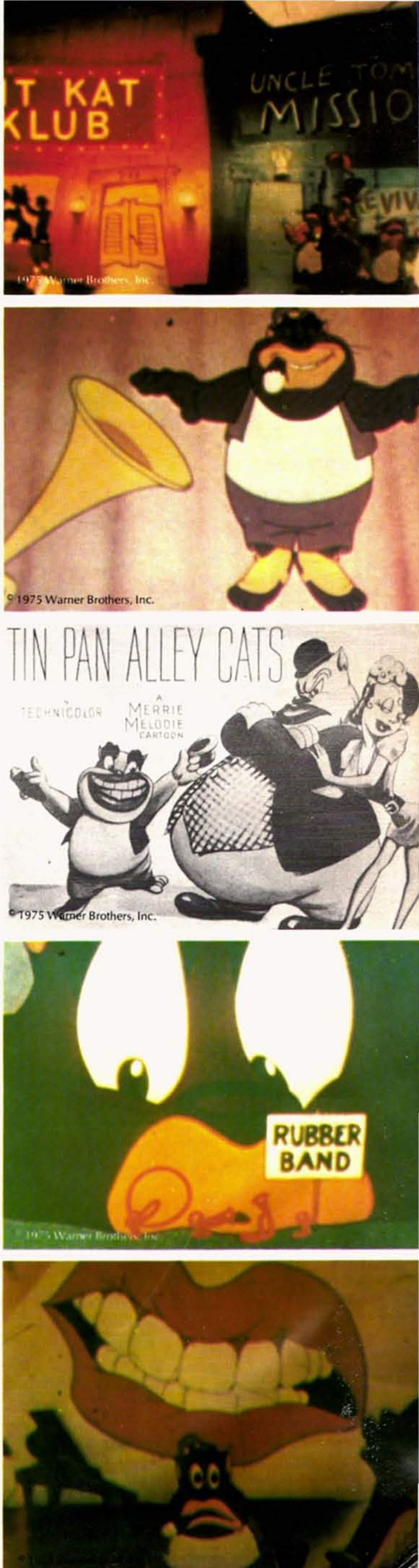
IT KAT KLUB
UNCLE TOM MISSIO
EVIV
© 1975 Warner Brothers, Inc.
© 1975 Warner Brothers, Inc.
TIN PAN ALLEY CATS
TECHNICOLOR
A MERRIE MELODIE CARTOON
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RUBBER BAND
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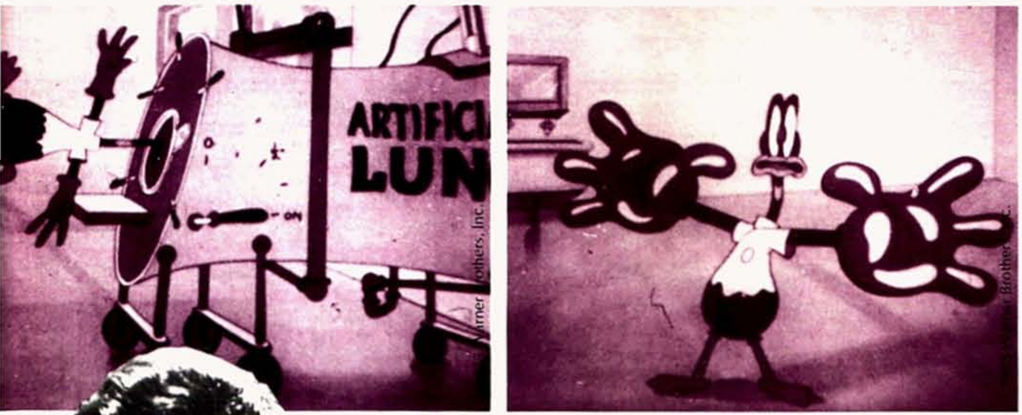
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EHH-WHAT'S UP, DOC?
BUGS and BOB CLAMPETT
WB

BOB CLAMPETT. Top left series of four: PORKY IN WACKYLAND (1938). Porky Pig tracks the last of the Do-Dos, worth trillions, surrounded by Clampett's wacky hallucinatory effects.

Above: DAFFY DOC (1940). Is there anything funny about an iron lung? The artificial lung gag, which may at one time have seemed unutterably grotesque, in retrospect was only an excuse for Clampett to exploit his sense of rubbery character motion: the fun of the accident's aftermath (right), as Daffy's head, hands, feet bulge in and out like inhaling-exhaling lungs.

Series of five, top to bottom, at right: TIN PAN ALLEY CATS (1942). Given the moral alternatives of Uncle Tomcat's Mission or the Kit Kat Club (top), which would you choose? Our protagonist opts for the latter; and in the middle of a jam session, he exhorts his trumpet player to "SEND me out of this world" in emulation of Fats Waller, on whom his character is based (second panel). He hallucinates the "out-of-this-world" lips (fourth) and an unforgettable "rubber band" (fifth), cited in a Clampett interview by animator-animation historian Milton Gray, in *Funnyworld* #12.

Left: Bob Clampett and friend, c. 1945.

"Well, for Heaven's sake! Grown men!"

Interviews by Joe Adamson

Animation is a complex, collaborative art, and it takes many men of many talents many days and nights to work its peculiar magic. While the animation director bears heavy burdens of responsibility and is granted in return an uncommon measure of control, he is dependent every step of the way on a battery of story men, animators, and graphic designers to bring his vision to fruition. In these interviews, two of Chuck Jones' assistants, writer Michael Maltese and designer Maurice Noble, discuss their roles in the elaborate process of cartoon creation.

Michael Maltese (right) with Friz Freleng.

COURTESY JOE ADAMSON

MICHAEL MALTESE

When you're watching an old Warner Brothers cartoon, and some powerful quality about the verbal exchanges makes you stop and say, "Hey, who wrote this thing, anyway, Preston Sturges?", you can be fairly certain you are in the able hands of Michael Maltese, story man at Warners from 1937 until 1958. Whether working alone or in collaboration with Tedd Pierce, whether working for Friz Freleng, Tex Avery, or Chuck Jones, Maltese wrote the funniest cartoons to come out of that or any other studio, characterized by Keatonesque sight gags and spiced by dialogue worthy of Ben Hecht. Maltese wrote exclusively for Jones from 1946 to 1958, and it was a peak period for both. This interview was held April 3, 1971.

MICHAEL MALTESE: It was fun going to work. The atmosphere! That place looked old, beat-up—it was right out of Dickens, you know? Really, you went in the back rooms, they were *dreadful* rooms. They had composition board for walls, and we used to put our fists through it, we used to throw darts at it. Dave Monahan tried to set fire to it once, just for the hell of it, just to see if it burned. And it wouldn't burn. We did everything to that studio. And the boss, Leon Schlesinger, passed the checks out once a week, and he said, "Pew, let me outta here! This looks like a shit house." But we loved it. To me it was like home. And The Looney Tune Bunch was something that will never be duplicated in this business.

We wrote cartoons for grown-ups, that was the secret. For instance, Porky Pig was a boy pig. Chuck's stories at the time were slanted towards the kids, and the grown-ups would go out in the lobby for a smoke while the Porky Pig cartoon was on. And they were talking about dropping Porky. So what we did, we made him into a grown-up, fussy-type bachelor, and we teamed him with Daffy once in a while, and we gave him more grown-up stories, and the result was that he picked up again.

They never went in for the cute stuff at Warners. There was only one guy that tried cute stuff. Chuck, at the time—and he'll admit it—had the Disney Syndrome: the urge to try to make the most beautiful cartoons going. Freleng would say, "Ah, bullshit! Let's knock 'em dead!" In 1944, when I was working for Freleng, we came up with Yosemite Sam in a picture called HARE TRIGGER, and I patterned him more or less after Freleng: "WHY, I'LL BLOW YOU TO SMITHEREENS! OOOOOH!" A real red-haired, hot-tempered little guy! Oh, he was a little firebrand. And a hard taskmaster. With Freleng, you never knew what he thought of your stories. He might love them, but he wouldn't tell you. I never knew how much Freleng valued my talents until I told him I was quitting to go with Avery at MGM, and then "OOOOOOOOOOOOH!" And he got to the boss, and the boss called me up at home and said, "You can't quit. Freleng don't want you to quit." I was flattered. And I was *surprised*.

The relationship between Chuck and me was just great. He gave me the freedom of expression that I couldn't have gotten from Freleng. So for twelve years I worked with Chuck. A writer will go into the director's room, and the director's busy and you'll say, "Can I see you a minute, Chuck? I'm supposed to do a Bugs Bunny. Now here's an idea that I got." And like as not, Chuck would say, "Go ahead," knowing that he could depend on you for turning out the type of humor that came out of the studio. God bless guys like Chuck Jones, who said, "Go ahead."

Chuck's scope is much, much wider than Freleng's. Freleng didn't dare venture forth; he would back off when you suggested a new thing to him. Chuck is a highly sensitive man; that's what makes him the artist he really is. That's why when one of Chuck's characters gets hurt you don't feel that they're really hurt. It's like he's going to make them better right away. When Chuck did a cartoon having to do with an alley—a dirty alley with a garbage can—Chuck's garbage cans always looked spotlessly clean. They looked like they were made out of platinum—beautiful! With Freleng, they looked *dirty*. When Freleng had a tough-looking cat, that cat was *dirty, vicious, rotten*. You could almost *smell* the cat. Chuck's cats were always clean, precious. And even when he'd try to make mean cats, there was always some kind of saving grace about them.

The guy with the most mischievous Bugs Bunny character in the whole studio was Tex Avery. He kept that studio jumping. When Avery was around, you got a kind of gaggy, fun atmosphere. Usually, anybody working for a director would say "He's the boss," and there would be problems. But Avery would cheer the guys into this crazy mixed-up attitude. And you can put this down—I don't care what you hear from anybody else—he took Bugs Bunny and instilled into him the character that *made* Bugs Bunny.*

Tex is a hard man to work for. He's a perfectionist to this point: that even when he's ready to turn out a good cartoon, it's still not as good as he wanted to make it. I'd tell him, "You proved yourself already," but he'd think, "No, it's got to be better!" He worried himself to the point where it got too difficult for him.

When Avery was gone [to MGM], the heritage that was left us at Warners was Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Porky Pig. And it was up to us to develop these characters and turn them into something. Each unit had so many Bugs Bunnies to do, and so many Daffies—the stock stuff. The rest of the schedule was up to us, these were one-shots. We came up with different characters that we thought would go, and they didn't go. Who could tell? We didn't say, "We're gonna do a Roadrunner cartoon, and it'll be a tremendous smash." We'd had high hopes for other characters, and they'd laid the biggest bombs! So we'd just say, "It's just another filler." It was a big surprise when Roadrunner became a hit. We did only one a year, then two a year, never more than that, for fear of killing it off.

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* Avery's Bugs Bunny films are A WILD HARE, TORTOISE BEATS HARE (both 1940), HECKLING HARE, ALL THIS AND RABBIT STEW (both 1941).

I did a picture with Freleng called DOUBLE CHASER, where a cat went after a mouse, a dog went after the cat, a dogcatcher went after the dog—and they all got tangled up, and it was very funny. Chuck and I used to kid around about a chase film. I'd say, "How 'bout an old wildebeest chasing an old gnu?" And Chuck'd say, "You mean a ga-nu, dontcha?" and I says, "Yeah, ga-nu." And he'd think, and he'd say, "How about a Mesopotamian yellow-bellied sapsucker chasing an Australian jackanapes?" One thing we learned was not to be self-conscious when you're thinking up stories or cartoons. Because people hate to laugh unless they have a reason; they feel embarrassed. But we knew, writing these cartoon stories, that the kidding around that we all did sort of broke down the barrier, and enabled us to go unashamedly, almost like children, into making absolute idiots of ourselves. An outsider would see us and say, "Well, for heaven's sake! Grown men!" But we understood.

We'd start the ball rolling by making cartoons of each other, or we'd start kidding around, or we'd go on and do these different kinds of acts. In one we showed Freleng, but Freleng didn't think it was funny. Freleng was bald; a bald-headed guy's always self-conscious about his hair, and nobody notices it, really. We did an act where Tedd Pierce is walking along the street and he stops and takes out his comb, and he combs his hair. Then he removes the loose hairs from his comb, drops them, puts his comb away. Now I play Freleng. I pick up the loose hairs and paste them on my head. We showed that to Freleng one day and he said, "You son of a bitch," and walked out.

Maybe we became cartoon writers because we thought this way, or maybe we thought this way because we were cartoon writers. I don't know.

MAURICE NOBLE

No one who sees Chuck Jones' cartoons of the 1955 - 1970 period can fail to notice the stunning beauty of the design work. Jones' cartoons were always well designed, and in the early Forties he was setting new styles in cartoon layout that were declared bold and innovative when aped by UPA a decade later, but with Maurice Noble he achieved a visual grace that is as delicate as it is striking. The Noble hallmark is as evident as Jones' in outstanding Warner and MGM cartoons like A SHEEP IN THE DEEP, BATON BUNNY, ROCKET SQUAD, the Academy-Award-winning THE DOT AND THE LINE, and the supreme tour-de-force of short subject animation, WHAT'S OPERA, DOC? This interview took place December 29, 1971.

MAURICE NOBLE: When you speak of the cartoons Chuck's made over the years, I think the variety of them and the exploration of ideas is really tremendous. We always tried to find a solution which seemed appropriate to a story, whether from the directorial standpoint or the graphic standpoint. The style came out of the cartoon, instead of vice versa. I think one of the strengths in Chuck's cartoons has always been just that: approaching each one as a fresh start. I have a tendency to clean my desk after each picture. I put everything away. I don't pull anything out of the hat and say, "Well, it was good last picture, I'll use it in this one."

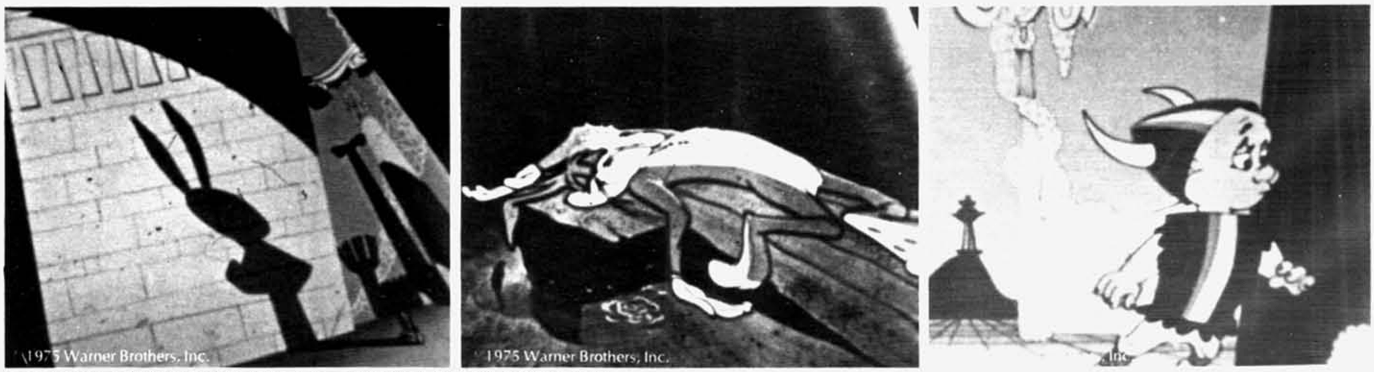
Many times Chuck would have an idea for a cartoon, and it would be either a rough story board or just a rough outline of a story. And he'd call me in and give me a general idea of what we were going after. He might say, "I need material there and here." So I would take his sketches and start weaving them into a continuity of graphics. And out of the graphics, sometimes, would come another facet of the cartoon: a gag, or staging, or even a complete dramatic switch in the middle of the cartoon. Then he would go back and introduce it into the story as he developed it and laid out the animation.

Some cartoons, just because of their nature, are A-B-C, right down the line. Others would permit the use of graphic exploration. We did a Space picture, and the idea of Space became more and more developed. I'd do a sketch, and pretty soon we had floating cities, and jet-propelled taxicabs, and all this. Space evolved. Far more than we ever anticipated originally.

I think WHAT'S OPERA, DOC? was one of them. The thing just got bigger and bigger and bigger, as these sketches came along, and I would work back and forth with Chuck on the staging and things like this, and eventually we had this super-colossal presentation. I've always loved that cartoon.

I don't know whether any other designer thinks in the same terms that I do, but I design in *motion*. If you have a panoramic shot, it's a series of areas that are exposed to the eye as they pass through. You have a big area and a small area and a staccato area and so forth—put on a flash of red, let it extend for a long time, and then two flashes of blue, and green, and it's a rhythmic thing. From the artistic standpoint, when you're on a still composition, your eye has a chance to wander and see a big area and a small area, and the balance of the composition. When you're on a panoramic shot also, your overall total has to balance out to be an interesting eye experience: your large areas and small areas are exhibited to the eye as the pan goes along, and the spaces and rhythms of this whole thing, this total over-all, is a visual composition in motion. And this is purely done by the use of color and space relationships, and accents in patterns of forms, and so forth.

There's a school of animation layout that I call the Nut and Bolt School: every rivet's in the right place, and every table is solidly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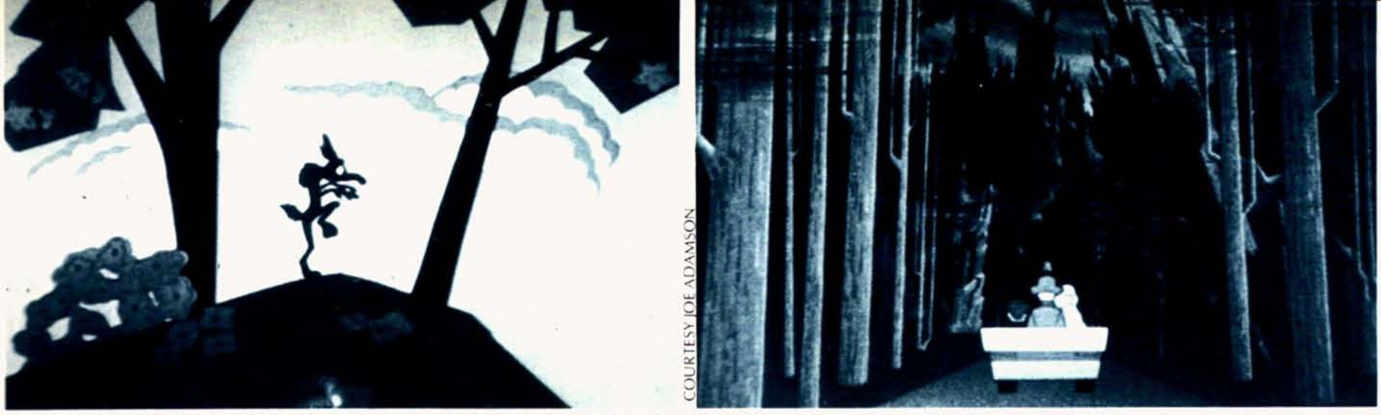
Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd in Chuck Jones' WHAT'S OPERA, DOC? (1957), Maurice Noble's "supreme tour-de-force of short subject animation."



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COURTESY JOE ADAMSON

Right: Chuck Jones' THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH (1971). Left: Jones' SHEEP AHOY (1954).

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

on the ground, and every chair is drawn so that you know it's a Chippendale. There are many very fine designers for animation who are not happy unless they have been able to put every nail in place all the way through a composition. But when the camera quickly goes across something like this, the important thing is what it says: "Table—Chair." An interesting table and chair. Because of the nature of the medium, the eye is exposed to something in such short flashes that everything must read very quickly, and in an interesting way. So it doesn't matter what period it is, unless you're definitely working in period. Then one exaggerates. You take what is the essence of that period and overemphasize it. I'm quite sure that a lot of the French furniture I've thrown in some of the Pepe Le Pews would never stand on their over-exaggerated curved legs. But the overall appearance when the eye sees it quickly is: Here is an overdone rococo French interior, of big swerving backs and so forth.

Exaggeration for comic effect also can be woven into it if that's what you're going after. But, in essence, all design for animation should have a certain humor to it. It must, in its shapes and color, contribute to the spirit of the cartoon. If it's stodgy design, and a Gang-Buster cartoon, they don't mix.

Working with Chuck Jones was a very *creative* experience. It got to the point where we would have a few short-hand conversations regarding the picture, and then he'd more or less say, "Don't bother me, just go ahead and do it." And I know that sometimes he was just a little surprised at what he got back. But it worked well, so he would keep his mouth shut. I was given a great deal of creative leeway, because I believe he had confidence in my taste and what I was doing for the pictures. If I designed something that didn't seem to be appropriate, he would let me know, with no doubt in his mind, that this was not correct—at least, to his way of thinking. And this is something that one always has to accept in any given production: the director is the director.

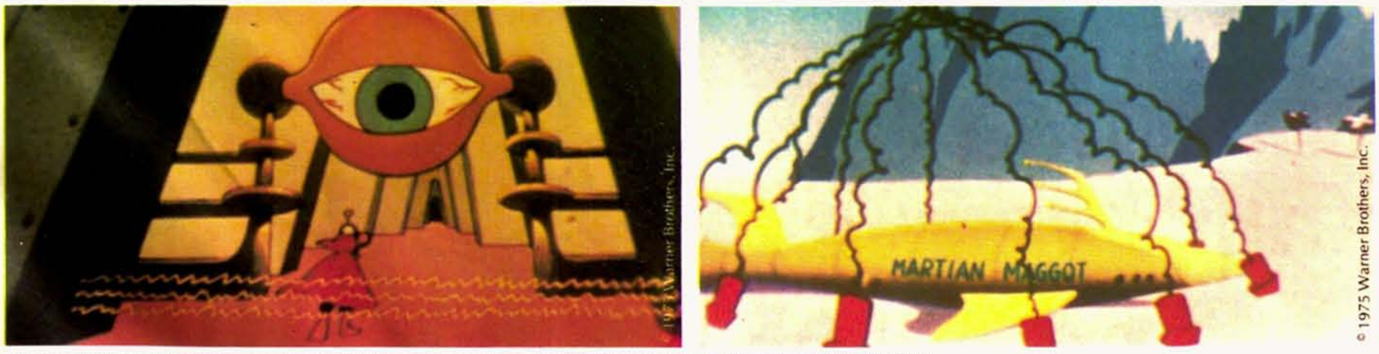
Chuck was the kind of person that *wanted* fresh ideas. He was kind of a Disney of the short subject. I don't believe I would have worked as many years for Chuck if he hadn't had these fresh ideas coming along all the time. Because one must really enjoy one's work to make it bloom, you know?

One thing about Chuck's cartoons is the tremendous number of cuts. And backgrounds. In the business, a "same-as" is a scene used over again. And his pictures would never have "same-as" backgrounds, because there was always a new facet or something, so it meant a new layout. Many times I would design maybe a hundred backgrounds for one cartoon. And this gave them a sense of motion and variety, while the other departments would be painting twenty-five or thirty backgrounds. And the same telephone pole would be coming through constantly. Well, my sense of design wouldn't permit me to do that. We couldn't go back and re-use backgrounds. And many times when we tried to, it was a loss of time, because we would have to make readjustments and re-paint and re-peg, and by the time we had gone through all that, we might as well have started from scratch.

At that time, most of the other animators belonged to the Shiny Door Knob School: they were putting highlights on brass doorknobs. And they would come back into my room to see what was going on, shaking their heads. Sometimes they would groan, and sometimes they'd be very puzzled, and sometimes they'd look at it and say, "What in the hell are you doing?" And I would say, "Well, I'm designing the picture. Isn't it interesting?" And to me it would be real interesting. And they wouldn't know what it was all about. They thought I was bats when I put that bright red on Elmer with those purple skies in WHAT'S OPERA, DOC? Yet they thought it was great when they finally saw it on the screen. I had the Ink and Paint Department come in and say, "You *really mean* you want that magenta red on that?" And I said, "Yes, that's the way." I had made this sketch and shown Chuck what the result was going to be, and he said, "Yeah, go ahead."

I did a character one time all painted in white. It was a woman with a white poodle, and a white umbrella, and she was all dressed in white. Everything. And I think a red rose was pinned on her. And they thought, "Why, there's no *color* to this character." Well, it looked beautiful on the screen.

I've been fortunate enough to pull off a number of things, so that now when I do something zany, they tend to listen to me. If I can't make it interesting, I don't want to stick around. I really don't. You work with some directors and this is *it*. They don't understand what exploring for ideas means. And this is what Chuck was always after: ideas. ⁂



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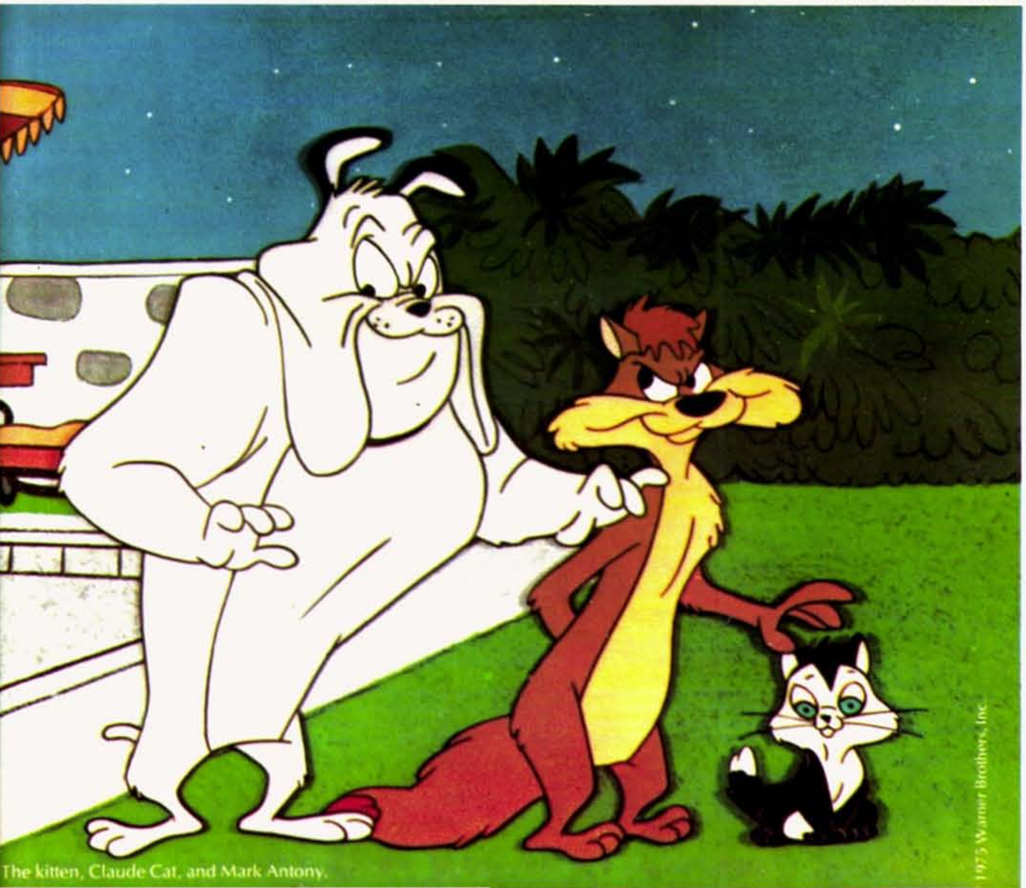
Maurice Noble's "electric eye" and "Martian Maggot" from Jones' DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24½ CENTURY (1953).

Like the great silent comedians, Jones could express emotions "through physical detail—and it was beautiful to watch."

Chuck Jones

Interview by Greg Ford and Richard Thompson

COURTESY JOE ADAMSON



The kitten, Claude Cat, and Mark Antony.

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BEGINNINGS; EARLY EXPERIMENTATION; REALISM VS. "BELIEVABILITY"

CHUCK JONES: Kansas City is where Ub Iwerks started, and Bugs Hardaway, and Hugh Harman and Rudy Ising and Walt and Roy Disney . . .all those people worked for that one little company, Film Ads in Kansas City. And until it kind of petered out, they actually made commercials, commercials for theatrical showing. Walt then came West, and then Friz, Ham Hamilton, classic animators, and they all got established with ALICE IN CARTOONLAND at Universal. I came up with the next generation—well, generations were separated by about eight or ten years then. Those of us who had gone to Chouinard Art School in Los Angeles, where could *we* work? We could go into commercial art or we could go into animation. So I worked with Ub Iwerks, who had split with Disney at the time. I worked for Universal, and then Charles Mintz, and . . .hell, in those days you jumped from studio to studio. But eventually I came to Warner Brothers. Meantime, I worked as a sailor for a while, went to South America or someplace.

Q. And as a lumberjack, and a cowboy . . .

A: I was *called* a lumberjack by Disney people who thought I was a communist.

Q: What does a lumberjack have in common with a communist?

A: Well, they used to say that the Communists took "little hairy Jewish people" along when they had a speech to make at a union meeting. When I spoke at a meeting, one of the Disney animators said, "How come they're using these big pink lumberjack types now?", and pretty soon everybody was saying it. So I went home and took a look at myself—I was twenty-five—and, sure enough, I was a big pink lumberjack type. And I was a *fat* lumberjack—two hundred and five pounds.

Q: In *Positif* magazine, they say that Chuck Jones, before he went to Warners, was a lumberjack, and had a big blue ox named Babe.

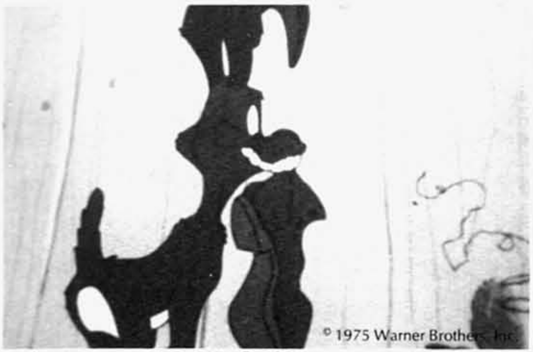
A: That was true. That was a sexual relationship. But anyway . . .

Q: Somehow, we've got your chronology all screwed up. Did you do that before you worked in any animation studios? Or in-between?

A: I don't know . . .Anyway, I did it.

Q: Your first cartoons, starting from about 1938, seem to make a much greater effort to approximate realistic shape and movement than your later cartoons.

A: That really was an effort, learning how to make things move. One of the things I think is basically misunderstood about easel art is that, say, Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenberg, de Kooning, Robert Motherwell can all draw beautifully. They all had line control. They had to learn that, and then they branched out. It's hard to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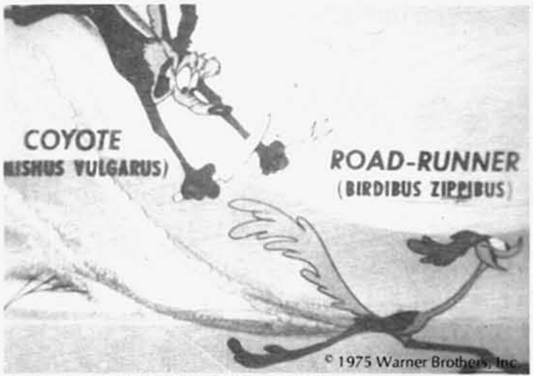
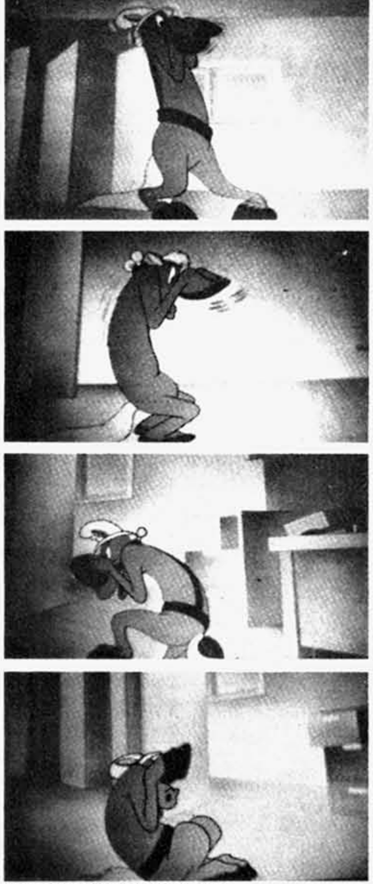
Frisky puppy in NO BARKING (1954).



Latinate titles in the Roadrunner cartoons.



THE DRAFT HORSE (1941).

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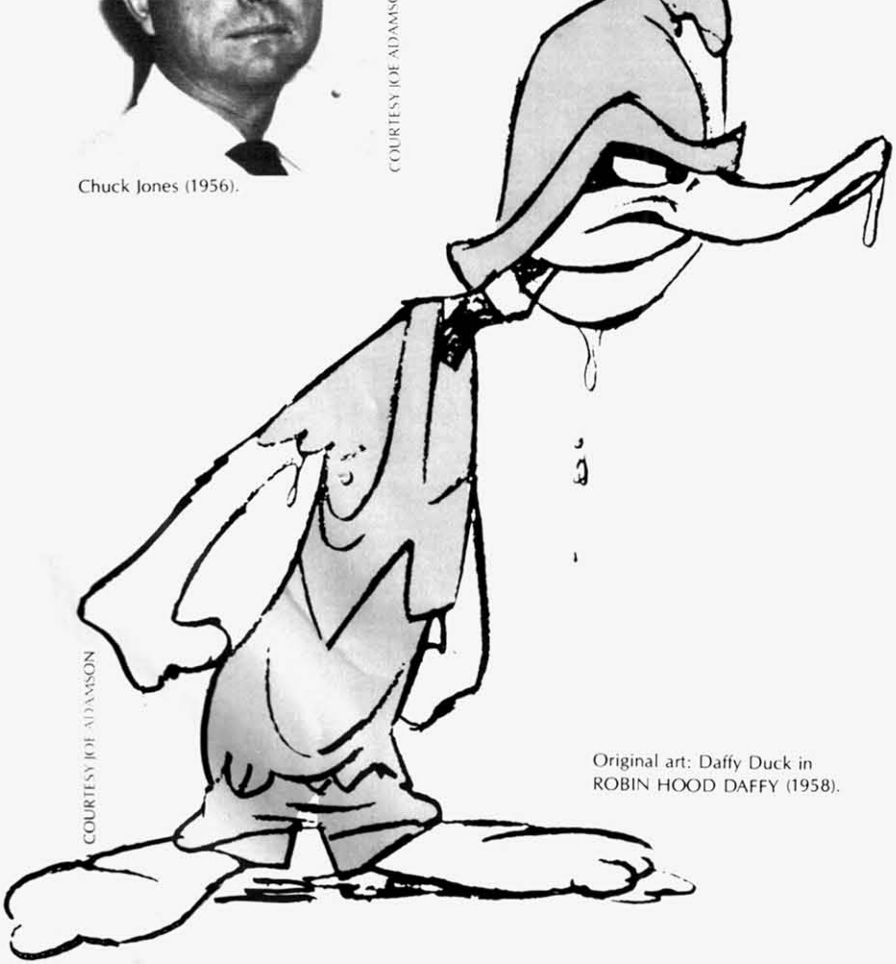
Chuck Jones (1956).

COURTESY JOE ADAMSON



Original art: Daffy Duck in ROBIN HOOD DAFFY (1958).

COURTESY JOE ADAMSON

CHUCK JONES CONTINUED

think of an artist that is worth anything who didn't have this ability. They started with the basics. With those early cartoons, I was learning the basics. What the hell, I started directing when I was twenty-five, so I had to learn the language, and so did my animators. We had classes—for years, we had at least two classes per week, at night. And we were working a five-and-a-half-day week, about fifty-six hours a week.

Q: Who conducted the classes?

A: I did. And I had to learn at the same time. I went to the lectures that they were having at Disney's with Don Graham. We also went through a whole series of classes from the Art Students League, conducted by Simone Nikoliades, who did those edged drawings, marvelous things, which kind of caught the character. He laid down the law that if you ever want to learn to draw, you have a hundred thousand bad drawings in you. And the sooner you get rid of them, the better you are. So we did thousands of drawings.

Q: This realism effects timing, too. An early cartoon like GOOD NIGHT ELMER [1940] is rather slow—it seems obsessed with realistic movement, shape, and shading.

A: The shading was there because of the presence of a single light-source, the candle, which was very important. The story was just a tiny thing: a man attempting to put out a little candle. How can you make an entire story about that? Is it possible? That's what I wanted to know. I wouldn't say it was a particularly successful picture, but it was crucial in terms of what came afterward.

You have to stumble a lot, I can't think of any other way of doing anything. There are no short-cuts. And nobody had the time to do a scene and then throw it away—we *had* to use it in the final film. At Disney's, during the same period, they were experimenting with things and then *not* using them. They could afford to, but we couldn't. There was nothing wrong with that, but several of the pictures were experimental—some of them worked and some didn't. Some were slow, but I was attempting to discover things about timing here, and in the early "Sniffles" films. Besides, they didn't seem as slow then, basically because all cartoons weren't at such a fantastic pace. The pace thing started with THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE [1935] at Disney's.

Q: One aspect of THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE which you seem to have picked out and expanded in the Pepe Le Pew series is the "Slow and steady wins the race" idea of character action. Pepe maintains his steady pace, while the female cat Pepe is pursuing finally wears herself out with faster but more sporadic movements.

A: I did that even earlier in LITTLE LION HUNTER [1939, Jones' first cartoon featuring the native African child Inki and the mystical mynah bird]. The mynah bird was that sort of steady character. I often have music dictating the steady pace. In the Inki series, the mynah bird would hop along to "Fingal's Cave Overture." That was my first experience with Mendelssohn.

Q: The vocabulary of Carl Stalling, the regular composer for Warners cartoons, is unbelievable. He can even anticipate the audience's association with the image. For instance, in the middle of the chase in FAST AND FURRY-OUS [1949], the first "Roadrunner" film, you cut to an overhead perspective of this highway cloverleaf that the characters are running around, and Stalling immediately refers to "I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover." He seems to be able to relate to any kind of music.

A: There was a reason for that: he was a lead organist at some of the biggest theaters in St. Louis and Kansas City, where you had to have everything right at your fingertips. That was one of the reasons he tended to go toward visual titles. When a character was eating something, he'd play "A Cup of Coffee, A Sandwich, And You," even though it might not fit exactly. If it was a lady in a red dress, he'd always play "The Lady in Red," or if a bee, he'd always play "My Funny Little Bumblebee," which was written in 1906. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't—that "Funny Little Bumblebee" thing was so obscure no one could make the connection. You had to be a hundred and eight years old to even know there was such a song.

Q: Around 1941 or 1942 your cartoons seemed to change—they began to present more violent and radical character-motion, and the backgrounds became more stylized. Do you think the War had any effect on this change?

A: I think as far as action and subject-matter were concerned, my cartoons actually *were* gentler before 1941 . . . so I'd agree with that proposition to a limited extent. But generally, no, I don't think there's much of a connection there. In terms of violent character-action, I suppose that I was effected somewhat by both Friz [Freleng] and Tex [Avery]. I always admired their sense of timing and sense of movement, and their gag structures—although they certainly worked differently. You see, after THE DRAFT HORSE [1941], I discovered that I could make people laugh—and not just be amused. And that's a heady thing. You get so you *want* to make them laugh, or at least make yourself laugh.

Q: THE DRAFT HORSE is still very funny today. To begin with, we're confronted with a superpatriotic plowhorse, flags in his eyes, who then of course is terrified when he's caught in the middle of some army war-games.

A: Well, at this particular time, very early in the Second World War, everybody was in favor of fighting. There were simple terms then. You have to be in contact with the idea of what Adolf Hitler was: he was an enormity, a giant black thing over the horizon. That was something you could see—he was an evil thing. It was the last of the great clearcut conflicts. Nevertheless, within the context of chauvinism, you could discover the idiocy of people just wanting to go throw themselves out in front of the cannon. At least you could be reasonable.

Another development is that after this film, and after the war, I worked more with the writer Mike Maltese. He was more of a gagman than Tedd Pierce, with whom I'd been working earlier. Tedd tended to be more of a writer. He was good at structure, and it was a humorous structure—but it wasn't gags. On the other hand, Mike Maltese was, and still is, a brilliant gagman. But whatever happened during that period, it probably wasn't due to the War. If anything, the War would have calmed it down.

Q: At any rate, we could say that in 1942 there suddenly was a decisive break from that over-awareness of realism.

A: Yeah, that's right. I think at that point the language began to be learned, and this group of people working together discovered that they were all reasonably facile. The team thing is very important. It gets to the point where you can snap your fingers, or make a single drawing to convey your idea. Whenever a new animator came to work for me, he was in trouble for a while, because on my exposure sheets, I would put down a notation like "BAL"—which was "balance"—or "ANT"—"anticipate." And all my animators had to know exactly what they meant.

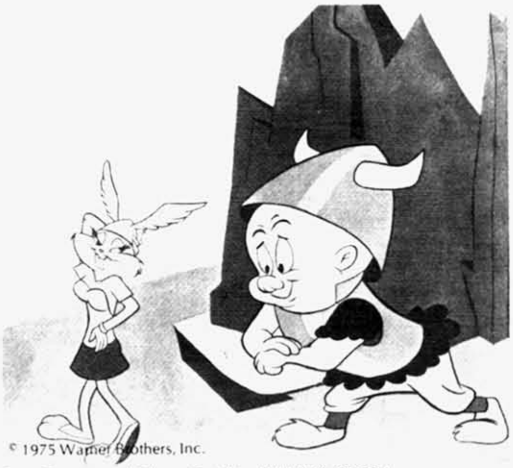
Q: What *did* it mean—an anticipation before the actual motion?

A: Sure. Or "BAL" might mean that I'd want a particular character solid on his feet before he did something, so you'd know that there was a stability to the thing, before it moved into action. Of course, I used "holds," and animators learned that when I put down a twelve-frame hold, that didn't mean thirteen frames or eleven frames—it meant twelve frames exactly. When the Coyote fell off, I knew he had to go exactly three or four feet and then disappear for eighteen frames before he hit. A new animator would come in and he would overlap that, and it would never work.

When we'd lay out dances, we began to understand that we could anticipate by one frame. If a step is supposed to come down on a beat, we found out that if you moved it up one frame, it would work, because the throw back to the middle of the theater, thirty rows back, would make the step appear to be exactly on beat. That's just one frame we're talking about, one-twenty-fourth of a second, but we found out it worked best for the entire theater if you were one frame ahead of the beat.

Q: How often did you use rotoscoping?

A: Almost never. Occasionally, when we had to shoot something like a complicated dance, we'd actually take live-action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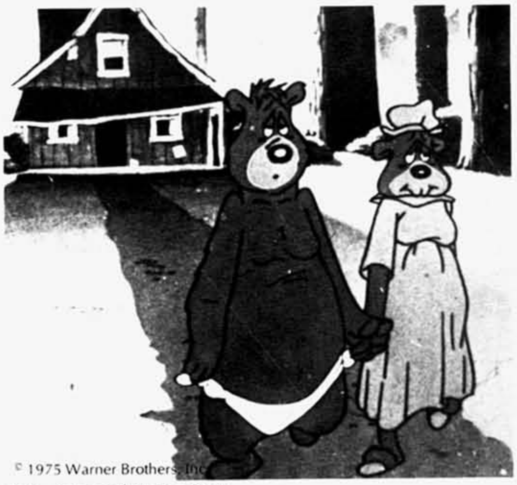
Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd in WHAT'S OPERA, DOC(1957).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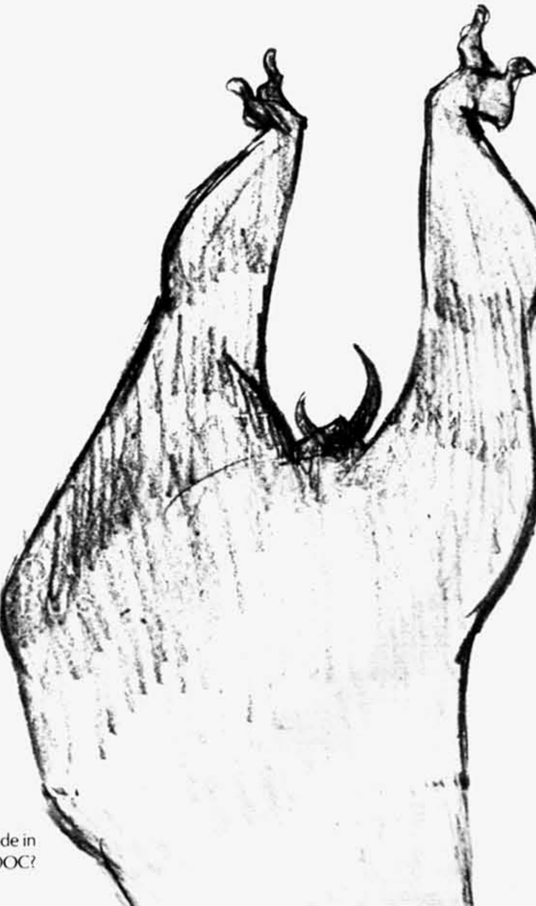
Baby Bear and Mama Bear.


COURTESY JOE ADAMSON

A Wagnerian shadow cast on a cliffside in
WHAT'S OPERA, DOC?

frames and study them, sketch them out and look at them to see where the feet would land. We did that for the leprechaun's little jig in THE WEARING OF THE GRIN [1951], where Porky goes to Ireland.

Q: There are so many disciplines just in terms of timing—the way Bugs Bunny walked must have been mathematically exact.

A: Sure, but the basic thing in animation is that you're talking about believability. You see, I was dealing with the idea of realism first, but then I realized that believability was much more important. So that with Bugs or any other character, it was the feeling of weight that mattered. One of the best examples of this is puppets or marionettes: they seem to work best if their knees don't bend when their feet touch the ground. Otherwise, they look all wrong, because there's no suggestion of gravity there. So I discovered that if you get the feeling of weight, you're all right—it doesn't really make much difference whether it's realistically drawn or not.

Q: In other words, the values become less literal and more abstract.

A: Sure. If you want it loose, if you want it buoyant, if you want it inflated like a balloon—well, go ahead and make it like a balloon. But if my decision is that it's a Bugs Bunny story—then Bugs has a particular weight. So I want him to feel, as he walks across a room, as if he has this given density, this given solidity.

Q: Unless he's pulling himself out of a hat, *à la* CASE OF THE MISSING HARE [1942].

A: Ah ha! But even then, pulling yourself out of a hat has a feeling of weight, as you lift yourself up. This feeling of weight and believability can even be offscreen, as in DUCK AMUCK [1953] and RABBIT RAMPAGE [1955].

Q: Certain themes started emerging the very first year you began to direct. In DOGGONE MODERN [1938], those two early dogs of yours, the boxer and his puppy pal, were pitted against the absurdities of technology, much as all those "Acme" devices would later backfire on the Coyote in his quest for the Roadrunner. The two dogs got trapped in a modernistic house-of-the-future.

A: That's right. They wandered in, and the place had a robot broom that would sweep up anything, regardless of what it was.

Q: And the dogs had to dodge the robot broom, to keep from getting swept up themselves. You did a remake of the same film about a decade later, this time starring your mice characters Hubie and Bertie [HOUSE HUNTING MICE, 1947], which seems to be such an incredible improvement on the original DOGGONE MODERN.

A: Well, the style of background was completely different in the two cartoons. In the first few pictures I worked on, we used a man by the name of Griff Jay, who was an old newspaper cartoonist—and he did what we'd call "moldy prune" backgrounds. Everybody used the same type of thing back then—Charlie Johnston drew backgrounds for Tex Avery, and he was an old newspaper cartoonist too.

Q: But the biggest difference between the two films is in the starring characters. The situation is the same, a pair of characters being victimized by the crazy electronic house devices, but Hubie and Bertie in HOUSE HUNTING MICE are active and fully developed characters, while the dogs are far too passive—they just don't have a chance.

A: No, they don't. The dogs don't really amount to anything. They just walk around and get mixed up in all the gadgetry. But they don't demonstrate any real human reactions, none that we can recognize anyway, beyond a sort of generalized anxiety. The characters aren't really established, so you don't care about the, You *do* care about Hubie and Bertie, though.

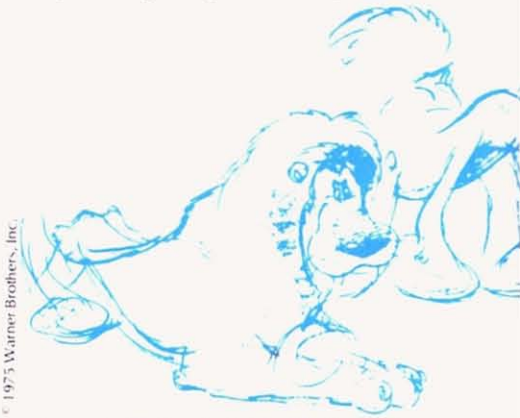
Q: They're real personalities. It's so much more exhilarating to see them respond to the machinery, occasionally react against it, and at odd times even triumph over it. There's a marvelous sequence where Hubie and Bertie succeed in temporarily outfoxing the robot, remember? Unlike the two dags, they finally realize that this fucking broom is going to whiz out and sweep up the debris, regardless of purpose, and so, this time, the characters make use of the fact and consciously try to wear the robot out. They turn on an automatic record ejector that shoots out discs and shatters them against the wall, the records fly and break into pieces, and the robot, invariably, has to come out and sweep up, again and again. Also, there are shots, with the simulated editing, of a missile sailing past intercut with a quick insert of a character, just watching it go by.

A: That may have been generated from a fascination with tennis matches, and such intercutting effects would often make the scene work. It also demonstrates that you could get an object to look like it's moving a hell of a lot faster with editing. And eventually, I began to add shadows of the missile flying past; this happened very often in the "Roadrunner" films.

Q: Most memorably, when you get an insert close-up of the Coyote, with a truck or train heading right for him, the shadow of it going over his face, and he's holding up a little sign that says "STOP, IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY," or something like that.

A: Of course you realize that all our stuff was pre-edited; it had "simulated editing," as you say. The editing was all in the director's head. A lot of people don't realize that, so it's interesting and well worth emphasizing. This wasn't necessarily true of Disney, but we didn't actually *physically* cut our stuff at all. The directors here developed the ability to bring in a cartoon within ten seconds of its proper length. It's easier to do this on a spot-gag picture that it is on a story picture, of course. It was really mental editing, and I've never met a live-action director, or editor, who understood how this could be done. It's just like shooting these little clips of film in live-action, at exactly their proper length, and putting them all together. And this was the *necessity* of the situation, since we weren't allowed any retakes. We weren't *allowed* to cut. We only had so much footage, and we had to do it right the first time. We did retakes in the sense that we'd re-animate something, if it was wrong, but we never re-filmed.

Q: One thing puzzles me: Treg Brown occasionally gets a "film editor's" credit. Usually he is credited as a sound-effects man.



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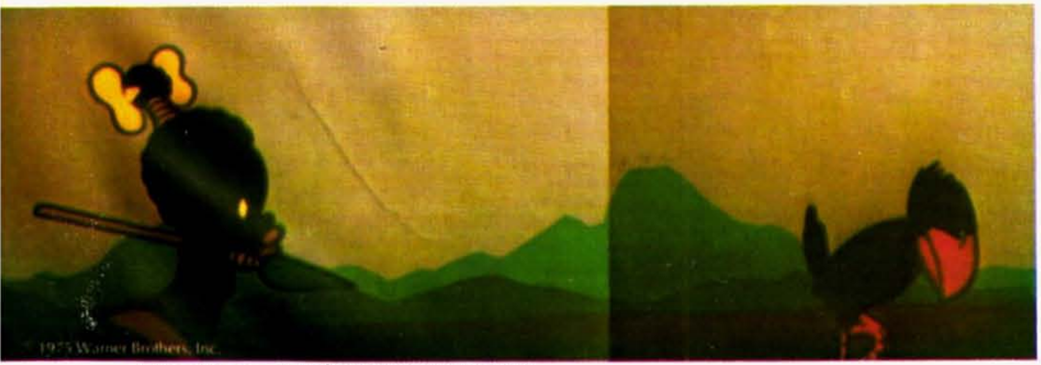
An original Culhane's sketch of the lion, with emphasis on hind legs, in INKI AND THE LION (1941).



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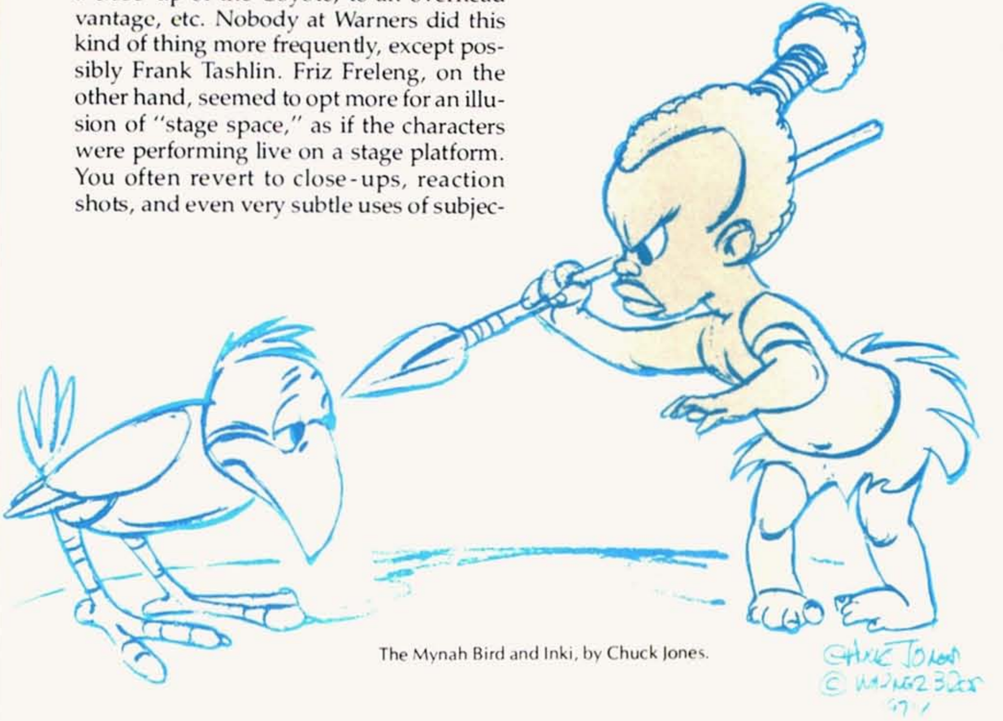
Inki and the Mynah Bird in CAVEMAN INKI (1950).

A: Right, the "film editor's" credit also refers to sound-effects; he was a sound effects cutter. He deserved his credit thoroughly, since he was one of the most brilliant sound-effects editors that ever lived.

Q: Your cartoons have more of this simulated, live-action-type editing than any other cartoon director's. In the middle of one of the "Roadrunner" chases, the camera angles switch rapidly from pan shot, to a close-up of the Coyote, to an overhead vantage, etc. Nobody at Warners did this kind of thing more frequently, except possibly Frank Tashlin. Friz Freleng, on the other hand, seemed to opt more for an illusion of "stage space," as if the characters were performing live on a stage platform. You often revert to close-ups, reaction shots, and even very subtle uses of subjective view points; Freleng goes for single-takes.



The Mynah Bird and Inki, by Chuck Jones.

A: It sounds like an observation that you'd be able to make more accurately than I could. I don't see my old pictures too regularly, and I never think of them in terms of cutting.

Q: Another thing wrong with the two early dogs that appeared in DOGGONE MODERN and a couple of other films at the time: there seemed to be some question as to what movements were defined for them. They were very naturalistically drawn, but their movements seemed to confuse human-like and canine actions.

A: That's why there wasn't any character, because what we were trying to do was to find out how the hell a dog moves. Just how he moves, and nothing much beyond that. That's when I was fighting the anthropomorphic idea of movement. They were modeled with back-legs like dogs, but nobody really knew how to move them properly. The result was that they looked rather awkward.

One very pivotal film for me was INKI AND THE LION [1941], where Shamus Culhane, one of the all-time great animators, finally got that lion to work—then Manny Farber wrote in *New Republic* that he thought the lion looked like Robinson Crusoe. Anyway, we had to go through the process of anatomy first, in things like DOGGONE MODERN, so that the later dogs still gave the impression of being dogs, but weren't drawn exactly like dogs and didn't move exactly like dogs. Marc Antony in FEED THE KITTY [1952] and CAT FEUD [1959] certainly appeared to be a dog, but he moved according to the anatomy we had established for him. He was overweight in front, and had a tiny behind.

Q: And the frisky puppy in TERRIER STRICKEN [1952] and TWO'S A CROWD [1951] was a natural-looking four-legged puppy. But his friskiness is just beyond the realistic. There came to be a very thin line for you, then, between the realistic and the slightly exaggerated.

A: Oh yes, a real dog might do other things than what this puppy does, but the puppy's basic characteristic is this fastness. So that's what I take off on and accent: that incredibly quick movement. He comes sliding in, barking like crazy, all ears, arms, and legs.

Q: And the squirrel in MUCH ADO ABOUT NUTTING [1953] is also a natural-seeming squirrel . . .

A: Technically, that's one of the best pictures I ever made. I studied squirrels just to find out how they moved; they turn their heads in almost one frame and then they hesitate as they look—like a bird, they don't have binocular vision. I love those little hesitations when he's looking around and sniffing. If the surrealistic ending worked it was because everything was so normal up to that time. The cocoanut was simply impossible to break, and when it did break there was another one beneath it.

Q: Just one ordinary squirrel setting out to crack an extraordinarily uncrackable nut. And he tries everything: sawing it, exploding it, riveting it.

A: That was a difficult picture to do. It was such a simple gag; it's almost idiotic in it's simplicity. No dialogue, of course. But when he tried to crack the cocoanut by pushing it off the Empire State Building—that was the sequence that got me. He starts pushing the cocoanut up all those flights of stairs, and I'm so sad for him when he has to push it up each stair individually, then scramble up the next stair and push it again, and so on.

EMOTIONAL NUANCE; FACIAL DETAIL

Q: What struck you as most impressive in Buster Keaton's repertoire of physical gags?

A: He often moved like he was being pulled away—he'd doubletake as though someone were yanking him by the back of his collar. The classic scene of all is where he actually *was* dragged off—in COPS, I believe. There were these hundreds of cops chasing him, right behind him; a streetcar goes by and Keaton just reaches out and grabs it and it pulls him off-screen.

Q:There's a gag like that in ZOOM AND BORED, where the Coyote's foot gets caught in the rope of the harpoon that he's just shot off. He's struggling to unsnarl his foot and finally succeeds, but then realizes that he's left mid-air over one of those terrible thousand-foot drops. So at the last second he grabs for the end of the harpoon rope, still zipping by—and he's yanked off in the way you described that Keaton bit. I seems to me you were influenced even more by Keaton than Chaplin.

A: I would think so, because my stuff is a little broader than Chaplin's, although the early Chaplin is quite broad, too. Chaplin originated those funny little hoppy runs and turns, where he bounces up and down a bit while rounding a corner. I'd use that a lot; I thought it always looked funny and strange because it wasn't at all necessary, physically. It was redundant. Similarly, Chaplin's surprised reactions were always comically over-elaborated. He'd jump up into the air and then come down and then start to run. The jump is solely a method of registering excitement and realization. He'd look like a human exclamation point, calling attention to his surprise—like saying, "Ah! I'm surprised!"—and then he'd run. Since they had no other means to express it, they'd do it with physical action, and it was beautiful to watch.

Q: You seem to have a special interest in eyes.

A: Oh yes. That's another thing I picked up from Keaton—those little eye-flicks toward the camera, which I'd use, say, whenever the Coyote realizes that something is inevitably going to fall on him and the action stops for a moment. Of course, that was always used in the early Tom Mix Westerns, too, during a tense poker game—everything would be stockstill in the frame except that the eyes, in close-up, would be flickering back and forth, left and right. I found that you could get a laugh from any of these minimal movements. Like in TERRIER STRICKEN, you hear the mistress off-screen telling the cat to take care of Frisky, the little puppy. Claude Cat has a devilish smirk on his face, of course, but we got the laugh from just his tiny eye-movement from side to side.

Q: Often you bring the whites together so that the two eyes are joined, to indicate a character's surprise.

A: That just seems to make the surprise dramatically stronger. I might take one eye up and even make the other one square under certain conditions. I found that once they're accepted as eyes, you can do anything with them to get strong effects. Tex Avery used them so that the eyes would shoot out approximately six feet, then fall on the floor, etc. I never went quite that far.

Q: You did, just once in a special case—HOPALONG CASUALTY [1961], when the Coyote reads that Earthquake Pills aren't effective on roadrunners.

A: I usually use such extremes only for strong reactions, as when the Coyote is amazed at the Roadrunner's speed and his jaw drops straight to the ground. But then he immediately picks it up and shoves it back into its proper place. I wanted to get his startlement at the Roadrunner's speed.

Q: Those movements seem to suspend time, like when the construction worker in ONE FROGGY EVENING [1956] finds the singing frog in the cornerstone, and gives a prolonged look of disbelief at the audience, or when the Coyote is scheming and one of his ears simply flaps over.

A: I don't know how long those movements take, but when I use them, you see, it's simply a matter of conspiring with the audience.

Q: Sometimes you suspend all action for a moment as beads of sweat start forming on a character's forehead—like when the guy in ONE FROGGY EVENING is showing the frog to the agent and is worried whether or not it'll sing.

A: In the earlier cartoons we'd have a heavier profusion of sweat for an anxious character. But in the Fifties we learned that just one or two beads looked better.

Q: Another one of my favorite instances of this time-marking animation occurs in BULLY FOR BUGS [1953] when the proud matador looks at the camera, doesn't move for a time, then simply flares one of his nostrils.

A: That's a caricature of Juan Belmonte, one of the great bullfighters. He looked like that and was every bit as vain. And then I put in him what I would feel under the same circumstances—that is, fear—once he's face to face with the bull. So he's dressed for the part, but he wasn't really the brave matador.

Q: But in terms of facial detail, I'd have to pinpoint FEED THE KITTY [1952] for its gamut-running of facial expressions.

A: Of course, that was a very sentimental picture.

Q: The tough bulldog falls hard for a tiny black kitten . . .

A: The dog starts out pugnaciously with the cat but then runs the entire gamut of a relationship with anyone. It's like a girl, you know, when you first meet her: then you gradually get so that you can stand her and then you fall in love with her, then you become obsessed with her and fear she's going to die or something. And that is what the dog went through: he was a very protective character. I got involved with that bloody dog, Mark Antony: his panic when he thinks the cat is going to die, his efforts to look nonchalant when he's trying to cover up for the cat. The drawings in that cartoon were a lot of fun.

GRAVITY, VELOCITY, AND THE RELATION OF FOREGROUND TO BACKGROUND

Q: What are your favorite effects to show, say, the force of gravity in cartoons? You often use those straight-on shots of the Coyote in the midst of a fall, and different parts of his body fall at different times.

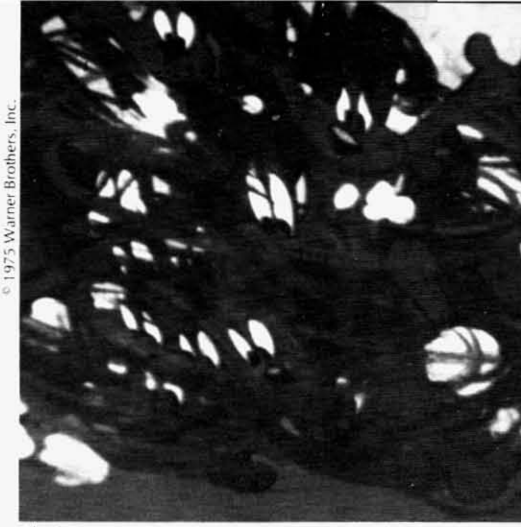
A: Well, that was an old trick of mine to emphasize the *idea* of falling. A good example of this in actual nature—one that always infuriated me—is when a red light changes. Why doesn't everybody move at once? But they don't: the first car moves, then the second takes its movement from the first, and so on, and yet supposedly it is possible that they could all start at once. To me it was funny to apply the same principle to a living body, so that the Coyote's trunk would drop away, and then his face and stretched-out neck would still be there, then the head would drop, leaving the ears, and then the ears'd drop off.

Q: It prolongs the agony, too, having the Coyote involved feel each part of his body drop at different times, his expressions changing in the process.

A: And yet when he lands, you know, it doesn't seem to hurt him any. It's usually just the idea of falling, the idea itself, which seems to carry the emotional impact.

Q: Sometimes you have entire cartoons set up around the idea of gravity. In MOUSE WRECKERS [1948], for instance, you have a whole string of gravity gags, the *coup de grâce* being the upside-down room sequence.

A: An earlier gravity gag in that cartoon is when Claude Cat is pulled through the house by the rope, which is triggered by the mice pushing the heavy boulder off the chimney. And remember? Claude would get pulled into stacks of dishes, around bannisters, under tables. Gravity is the simplest thing to use if you don't happen to have any other tools at hand.



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The frisky puppy, his fastness emphasized, in NO BARKING (1954).

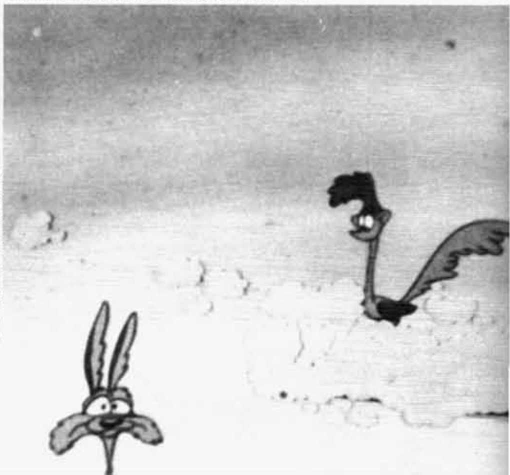
I have a running gag I want to do sometime—picking up on the image of the Big Spring, and making an entire cartoon about it. The Coyote could just get caught up in the spring, then later it could just bounce him along, then he could get caught up in it again, and it would just keep going. Then he could fall off the edge of a cliff and one end of the spring could catch on top of the cliff, and then he'd get down to the end of the spring, and there'd be an outcropping and he'd grab the outcropping. And then he'd spring back to the top and he'd pull the outcropping up and that would drive him down again. Because when something compresses, it has to go in the opposite direction—it's cause and effect. And so, you see, just this spring, combined with gravity, would be all you'd need in terms of motive power.

Q: How would that cartoon end, just in the middle of the action?

A: I don't know how I'm ever going to end it, but it would obviously end up in a situation that implies a continuum, where the action goes right back where you started from. That "Here we go again!" kitsch. We might even use a spring wipe for the ending, going off in the distance or just falling away from the camera.

Q: MOUSE WRECKERS seems to us to be a major cartoon because of the controlling factors of the film are always kept off-screen. Your two mouse characters,

The Coyote, with stretched-out neck, falls out of the frame in ZOOM AND BORED (1957).



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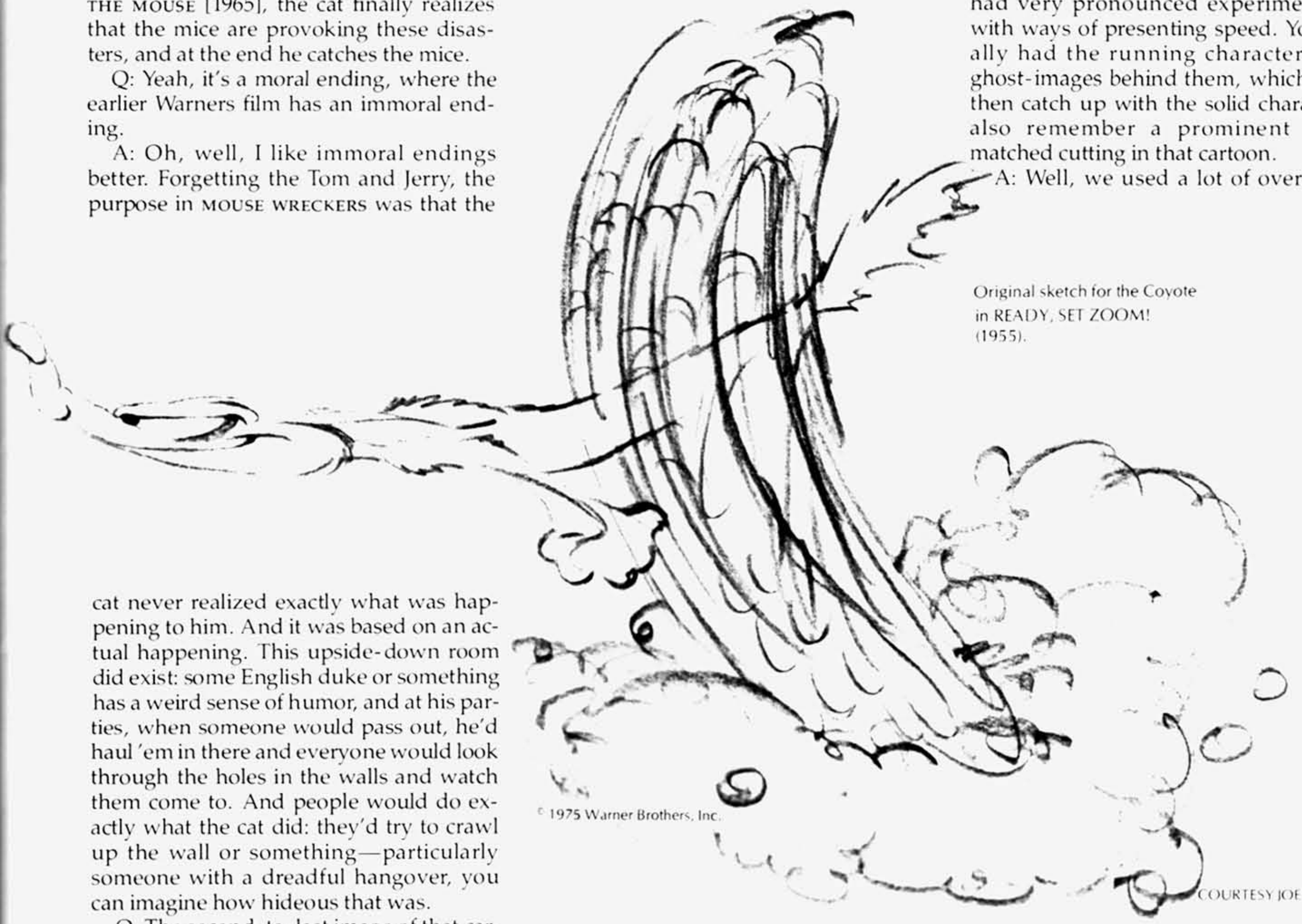
Hubie and Bertie, are stationed on the chimney playing architectural mind-games on poor Claude Cat, who's alone in the house below. The mice reconstruct his entire room, and when Claude wakes up, he doesn't know whether these things are really happening or whether he's hallucinating it all.

A: In the later M-G-M remake, YEAR OF THE MOUSE [1965], the cat finally realizes that the mice are provoking these disasters, and at the end he catches the mice.

Q: Yeah, it's a moral ending, where the earlier Warners film has an immoral ending.

A: Oh, well, I like immoral endings better. Forgetting the Tom and Jerry, the purpose in MOUSE WRECKERS was that the cat never realized exactly what was happening to him. And it was based on an actual happening. This upside-down room did exist: some English duke or something has a weird sense of humor, and at his parties, when someone would pass out, he'd haul 'em in there and everyone would look through the holes in the walls and watch them come to. And people would do exactly what the cat did: they'd try to crawl up the wall or something—particularly someone with a dreadful hangover, you can imagine how hideous that was.


Original sketch for the Coyote in READY, SET ZOOM! (1955).

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COURTESY JOE ADAMSON

Q: The second-to-last image of that cartoon is amazing. It's just Claude's eyes, with the cat being driven totally insane, cowering at the top of a tree, and the leaves falling away just enough to reveal those eyes.

A: In that picture I used a different thing: the eyes were handled almost like a pair of animated breasts—did you notice that?

Q: Yes, the pupil came out of the ball of the eye, like a nipple. The fear registered in Claude's eyes in amazing, as he looks from side to side.

A: Phil Monroe did a good job on that.

Q: When Claude is in the upside-down room, on the ceiling that he thinks is the floor, trying to keep his balance by digging his claws into the ceiling, the camera turns around and goes upside-down with Claude; it's fascinating. I wonder if you were trying to show the force of gravity through motion alone, and without the standard visual presentation of what's up and what's down.

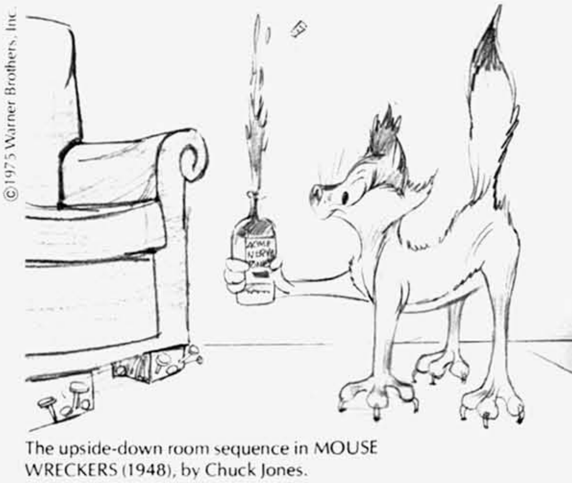
A: Well, Claude opened the bottle and the liquid flowed up, while if it were shown from your viewpoint it would naturally flow down. And I wanted to show what he felt. Actually, Charlie Chaplin used something like that in the opening airplane sequence of THE GREAT DICTATOR, when he's piloting his plane upside-down. And the same series of gags are in the Porky Pig cartoon JUMPIN' JUPITER [1955] when they lose their gravity. There I didn't have to turn the camera around, obviously, since it was in outer space. I just used a little sign that read: "You are now entering a low gravity zone."

Q: This brings us to another natural force. I was wondering about your means of expressing velocity on the screen. One of my favorite gimmicks is in BULLY FOR BUGS: as the bull charges, it leaves dozens of hooves in mid-air behind it. Daffy's horse in DRIP-ALONG DAFFY [1951] leaves hooves in its wake as well. You often use dust, as when the Coyote is lagging just behind the Roadrunner and is trying to pick up speed.

A: Well, there again I'm giving the viewer something to hold onto, something to register the speed. A bow and arrow is a good example from real life. You pull the string back, and release the arrow, but the bow is there—except in a Daffy Duck cartoon. But the bow is there with its string vibrating and so, with these two things in combination, you still have something on the screen after the arrow is gone. Here, what's important is what's left over: the catapults in my cartoons are shown the same way, they give you a reference-point.

Q: There's an early Daffy Duck cartoon called CONRAD THE SAILOR [1941] which had very pronounced experimentation with ways of presenting speed. You actually had the running characters leave ghost-images behind them, which would then catch up with the solid characters. I also remember a prominent use of matched cutting in that cartoon.

A: Well, we used a lot of overlapping graphics on that particular cartoon, so that one scene would have the same graphic shape as an earlier scene, even though it would be a different object: first we'd show a gun pointing up in the air, then in the



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The upside-down room sequence in MOUSE WRECKERS (1948), by Chuck Jones.

next shot, there'd be a cloud in exactly the same shape. It gave a certain stability which we used in many of the cartoons after that. John McGrew was the artist responsible for that sort of thing. CONRAD was also the one where we used the first complete 360-degree turn, when the characters went up through the air.

Q: Conrad and Daffy are being chased through the air by a torpedo, and they go around full circle.

A: The fields themselves did not turn all the way around. The field only made a partial turn. The effect was accomplished entirely by changing the shape of the clouds. The clouds were the main thing. So when you saw it, it looked like you made one complete revolution—we started at one end looking down on a battleship and at the other end you were looking down at the same battleship again. It was a very tricky problem; I'm not sure it was worth it.

Q: You've used the same basic technique since, as when the camera seems to do a 180-degree tilt. In MOUSE WRECKERS, when Claude is being pulled through the drainpipe, you must have drawn the drainpipe so that it bulged out in the middle and tapered off at either end, to allow for the perspective-change during the camera movement. Also in CONRAD, you have the clouds dissolving into foliage, which serve as the background for the next shot. In regard to technical facilities at Warner Brothers, did you have a multiplane camera, or anything like it?

A: No, we faked it a lot but we never had any such thing. I don't think any studio did except Disney's.

Q: Sometimes, the Warners cartoons have at least *two* layers, moving in perspective during a shot.

A: Well, we could do that all right. Johnny Burton, who was in charge of production, was pretty damn good at maneuvering things around to get a three-dimensional effect, but all three layers would actually be on the same level as we were photographing them. He was very clever at working out the speed at which foreground material should go, in relation to a second layer. I've used as many as three layers to achieve certain effects.

Also, one of the reasons you'd use a foreground object, if you weren't cutting in the middle of a pan shot, is that your background drawings would have to repeat—otherwise, they'd be on a mile-long sheet of paper. So you'd have to use a telephone pole to cover up the break between the first background and the duplicate field. But finally, with the "Roadrunners," say, this type of perspective didn't seem to count. We dropped it, since it just didn't seem necessary. The pans were so damned fast that the audience could never look at them too closely; other times, you'd get your speed and perspective effects just by having a diminishing body in space. You see, if we couldn't achieve the idea of intense speed through the character drawings, there didn't seem to be much point in using added mechanical means.

Q: In the later cartoons, you seem to use completely "slanted-over" backgrounds to accent the speed of the character.

A: Well, that was Maurice Noble's idea. And he'd always take this opportunity to use a lot of interesting shapes—abstract curves and things of this sort, which gave a sort of depth feeling to it. But for the most part, we were trying to avoid forced or Italian perspective, which you'd establish by having the various buttes get progressively smaller into the background. Except for the road itself, we used almost none of this forced perspective. The buttes and desert landscape backgrounds were flattened out, more Japanese.

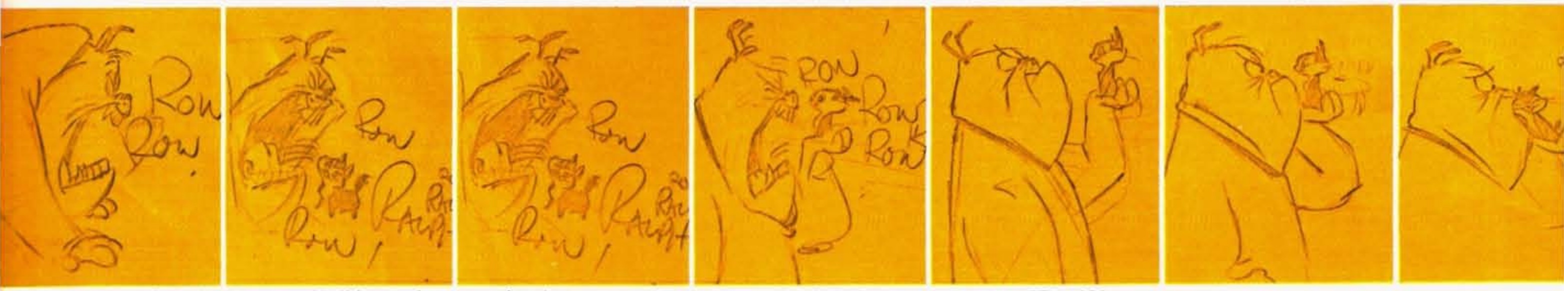
Donald Graham, the dean of all art teachers for cartoonists, always said that cartoons were unique in the way they established space by movement. And he said that the "Roadrunner" series was the only case that he knew in which a form moved in "pure" space, where the space was achieved *entirely* by the form moving it.

Q: That's certainly evident when you get those overhead-viewpoints of the Coyote falling off a cliff. He falls straightaway from the camera, isolated against a completely blank background, diminishing, then disappearing for a time until—poof!—he's been reduced to a puff of dust on the ground below. Are there any antecedents to that? In SUPER RABBIT [1943], Bugs Bunny is flying along and is about to "recharge his batteries," but then accidentally loses all his fortified, super-vitamized carrots, and he falls to earth at that point—a beautifully animated fall. In style and camera angle, it seems to anticipate the Coyote's later falls.

A: That was animated by Ken Harris, and it was very similar to all the Coyote's later falls. Ken added that "loose-limbed" feeling to the action.

Q: In one case you used the same background in two cartoons: the "Electric Eye" that was in both DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24½ CENTURY [1953] and ROCKET SQUAD [1956].

A: Yes, that giant mechanical bloodshot eyeball suspended from the ceiling. I liked the shape of it, and it went so fast that I thought it would be fun to use it again. It was designed by Maurice Noble. He created most of the space-age gadgetry for those films. Maurice also invented that ROCKET SQUAD "Evaporator": the character would step into a weird test-tube glass contraption and ZAP! disappear and rematerialize somewhere else. In that case, Maurice worked ahead of me on the story and originated that contraption.



The gamut-running of bulldog Mark Antony's facial expressions when confronted with the kitten in FEED THE KITTY (1952).

A: Yeah, that's exactly what we did. We used it before in an early "Sniffles" cartoon. In fact, that's one of few tricks we originated that Disney took from us—remember the perspective trick when the alligator comes slithering down that pole in "Dance of the Hours" [from FANTASIA]? Anyway, John McGrew was a great student of film techniques. And oddly enough, much of the staging in CONRAD THE SAILOR was taken from Eisenstein's writing. It had mostly to do with matched dissolves, with the relation of one shot to the next—so that one scene, formally, might be exactly the same as the previous one, even though the subject would change.

Q: You have a transition like that in HOLD THE LION, PLEASE [1941], one of your earliest Bugs cartoons, where this weakling schnook of a lion is claiming his status as "King of Beasts," and all the other animals in the jungle are laughing at him. The laughing animal faces in the first composition dissolve into shrubs, flowers, and

Q: There is always a very marked contrast between foreground and background in your cartoons. Would you say that you say that you generally gave more leeway to your background artists than other directors might?

A: Yeah, I did—you see, what I did was to draft a very rough plan, just to show the layout man what I wanted. Now, if I put in a doorway, say, all I wanted was room for the character to exit; I didn't care what the doorway looked like, beyond that. Maurice would take my layouts—let's say there'd be ten layouts for the scene—then he'd make a sort of *mise-en-scène* that defines the limits of the character action. He'd find the layout that goes the furthest to the right, the one that goes the furthest to the left, the deepest one, the closest one, and generally planned where most of the action would have to fall. He'd take all these separate layouts and put them all in one drawing, and then design the background around it. He'd also take into consideration what was happening in the story—which very few background men ever do. Generally speaking, the foreground characters were all mine, but Maurice would also often design background characters which were visually very strong, like those Baroque-looking French bystanders in the later Pepe le Pew cartoons.

Now, in the "Roadrunner" series, we almost never used color for emphasis. But in a more overtly experimental picture like FROM A TO ZZZZ [1954], we had a scene in a boxing ring, we flashed to a completely red background at the punch, which then quickly diminished. There was a lot of high contrast stuff in that cartoon. But the most outstanding example of Maurice's acheiving mood with his backgrounds was WHAT'S OPERA DOC? [1957].

Of all the people I've worked with, Maurice was probably the most influential. Maurice was a brilliant designer, and very often people give Phil DeGuard credit for design, since the credit roster would say "Backgrounds by Phil DeGuard." Phil was an excellent follow-up man, certainly, and he's a fine painter, but he bears the same relationship to the layout man, in preparing a picture, that a contractor does to an architect in constructing a building.

Q: What about John McGrew's style and approach, as compared with Noble's?

A: John McGrew didn't really have a style; he was experimenting all the time. Maurice *does* have a style. John McGrew, you might say, was more of an intellectual. You could be intellectual, and get away with it . . .but if you're solely intellectual as a director, you weren't going to get away with it. The result was, however, that he goosed me into thinking that it might be worthwhile to try some different things with backgrounds, and so forth. And later on, I would find this kind of thing very useful, in that often it would make your gag work, and sometimes you wouldn't even know why. Like that little abstract background at the end of DUCK AMUCK, with the sharply angled lines going off.

Q: There's a similar design in ARISTO-CAT [1943], where abstract linear shapes serve as an expression of the character's mood—an almost laughably superabundant expression. This silly patrician cat is helpless when his butler walks out, so the cat goes running terrified through the mansion, screaming out "Meadows!" in a series of takes, each one with a new wallpaper design in the background, directly reflecting the cat's feelings.

A: That was McGrew. He was deeply interested in the emotional effects you could get from those jagged red and white lines in the wallpaper. It's quite jarring. So, even though we were working with just a silly little cat, we wanted it to appear as though he were really in a state of panic.

MICROCOSM/MACROCOSM—JONES' SENSE OF MINIATURIZATION

Q: I love the monumental prelude of CAVEMAN INKI [1950], your last cartoon with Inki and the Mynah Bird. It's crazy how the Mynah Bird, a tiny creature, is associated with mountains crumbling, the earth shaking, natural catastrophes that terrified all the larger animals.

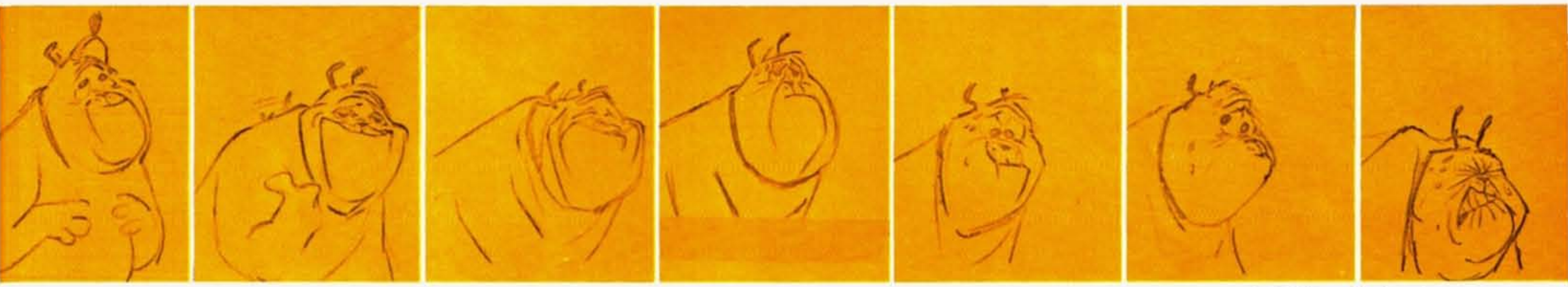
A: Oh, they weren't terrified of the Mynah Bird, but they were terrified of the natural condition that arose from the Mynah Bird's appearance. The mountain split right in half, remember? Everyone expects something pretty tremendous, and then this little thing comes out.

Q: Isn't this a recurrent theme? You frequently show these violent contrasts between very small characters and their environments. It's visible in your early TOM THUMB IN TROUBLE [1940], which features little Tom taking a bath in his father's cupped hands. It's also operative in your early Porky cartoons—PORKY'S ANT and PORKY'S MIDNIGHT MATINEE [both 1941]—that co-star an African pygmy ant. Then in TO ITCH HIS OWN [1958], years later, there's your flea, the Mighty Angelo, who wants to settle down on some nice quiet dog in the country. A lot of directors have used size deformation, but differently. Clampett's tiny characters are often designed to convey smallness and cuteness, with heads and rumps large in proportion to the rest of their bodies. Similarly, when Avery magnifies his characters in KING-SIZE CANARY [1947], their shapes change to convey largeness—their stomachs distend grotesquely out of proportion. But when you shrink or enlarge a character, their anatomies retain their original proportions. It's less like biological nightmare, and more like a sort of absurd displacement. Your pugnacious flea, the Mighty Angelo, looks like a perfectly proportioned circus he-man.

A: As a sort of lay physicist, I've always been fascinated by the peculiar perfection of tiny things. When I was a kid, there was a general assumption that things which were very small were imperfect. Large houses were fine, while a grain of sand was nothing. But the more I became acquainted with this, by reading Sir James Jeans and Isaac Asimov and other popularizers of science, the more I realized that it wasn't a matter of perfection or imperfection. Long after that, I finally got along to the DNA molecule. The most perfect thing and the most misunderstood thing is the DNA molecule. And then, on the other hand, you have infinities that no one can possibly understand either.

So you begin to wonder if there isn't some kind of big loop that hooks them together—perfection/imperfection, small size/large size, microcosm/macrocosm. Each "opposite" is really the same thing looked at from a different viewpoint. If I'd been a physicist, I would probably have hooked into it in another way; or if I had been a novelist, I probably would have tried to write something like O'Brien's *The Diamond Lens*, which was preoccupied with the same idea. I *did* read it when I was young, and it probably had something to do with my later work. At the time, the idea of a story like that seemed ridiculous. But now we know it's far from ridiculous. HORTON HEARS A WHO [1971] was a good example of a microcosm/macrocosm relationship, and it also contained the "person's-a-person-no-matter-how-small" idea, which, I agree, is also represented in things like PORKY'S ANT.

Q: It's interesting how long you've kept



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this concern, and how images from your earlier films spring up again in the later ones, in altered ways. Your early black-and-white JOE GLOW THE FIREFLY [1941] has a firefly scooting around the face of a sleeping camper, walking the part in the guy's hair; and the camper's mouth, twitching in sleep, creates a major earthquake for Joe. Years later, you do this again in BEANSTALK BUNNY [1955] with the same kind of immense close-ups on a human head, as Bugs and Daffy are running around the Giant Elmer Fudd's ears, nose, and mouth. It's a weird, almost Swiftian image.

A: The Swiftian connection is exactly right, because I remember those descriptions of enormous pores and things that Gulliver saw, the enormous size of the hairs, and how gross it was when he was on a woman's breast.

Q: The humor of these change-of-scale effects seems to be based on taking a character who's tailor-made for largeness, whose very drawing style and body-structure suggests largeness, and shrinking it—like the tiny bulldog in your late "Tom and Jerry" cartoon THE CAT'S ME-OUCH [1965], who had those wild flashing teeth that tore through all the other characters.

A: Yeah, that little piranha dog! He was really a shrunken version of the big bulldog, Marc Antony.

Q: Or, most especially, your miniature elephant who "terrorizes a large metropolis" in PUNCH TRUNK [1954].

A: That had to be a real elephant; it couldn't even be a cartoon elephant. It wouldn't have worked at all unless it was a real elephant. You had to establish it as a perfect miniature—and the people who see it as real people—or else their response wouldn't count. If we had used an anthropomorhized elephant, there wouldn't have been any shock value to it, and you wouldn't have believed it.

Q: Not all the people who see the elephant are surprised by it, though.

A: No, but that's the idea. Some people live with fantasy every day of their lives. The drunk, you remember, staggers out, sees the elephant, and takes it calmly—just looks at his watch and says, "You're late!" The little girl who lives in the penthouse accepts it as a new toy, while the people who trade on "sanity"—such as the parents of the little girl or, later on, the psychiatrist—are terrified.

Q: Technically, the movements of the elephant are so fluid. It's as if you were using the same number of drawings that you would if you were animating a large elephant.

A: Yes—in fact, I would say we used *more* drawings. We used a real elephant cry on the soundtrack, too. The same thing, in a different area, is the bull in BULLY FOR BUGS. The bull had to be believable as a bull: he had to present the same terror and probability of injury to Bugs as he would to you. And that's why I showed that first man facing the bull, the Juan Belmonte caricature, before Bugs even got into the story—if *he's* afraid of the bull, well, poor Bugs. But that's the trick, I think, if you're going to do miniaturization: you've got to make your audience really believe that such a thing is possible. Of course if you'd ask Eddie Seltzer, our producer, he'd say, "You should use *fewer* drawings for a goddam little elephant!"

Q: The same thing seems to work, in reverse, with that little puppy you had in TERRIER STRICKEN and NO BARKING [1954]. His motions and anatomy are tailor-made to convey smallness and friskiness. And yet, with the same type of funny perverseness, you took *that* character, in the 3-D cartoon LUMBERJACK BUNNY [1955], and made him into a giant—casting him as Paul Bunyan's dog.

A: Right, his movements are frisky. When you look at a puppy, at the time he first stops being an infant and becomes what you'd call an adolescent puppy, well, his movements *are* very quick. They stand there posed, ready for action, looking at you and trying to provoke you—so their movements are very cleancut and sharp.

DISNEY

Q: I'd like to talk about your attitude toward Disney. Not only the person of course, but all the associations one has with the Disney name. In your cartoons, Disney seems to be a simultaneous inspiration and exasperation.

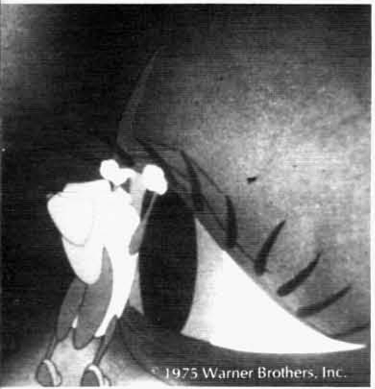
A: Well, I know I exasperated him a lot. You see, the THREE LITTLE PIGS established the whole idea of character animation. Before that, there wasn't such a thing. The cartoon with the grasshopper and the ant, and others they did in the Thirties were the progenitors of the whole idea of character animation. And Bugs Bunny, of course, is finally the offspring of Max Hare from Disney's TORTOISE AND THE HARE—that was the first pure speed cartoon as well.

Q: It certainly seemed to influence you a great deal.

A: And it's still pretty hard to beat. And BAND CONCERT [1935] was superb, but it wasn't as quite as strong a development as THREE LITTLE PIGS. The three pigs looked alike, but had completely different personalities. You might say that they were the beginnings of the Seven Dwarfs, who all looked similar but all had different personalities.

Q: THE BAND CONCERT expresses character conflict in terms of musical conflict in the same way that your LONG-HAIRED HARE [1948] does. Donald plays "Turkey in the Straw" on his fife, interfering with Mickey, who's trying to conduct the *William Tell* Overture. You have Bugs Bunny strumming a banjo, and belting "What Do They Do on a Rainy Night in Rio?," while your opera-singer, Giovanni Jones, is trying to sing an aria.

A: I don't know if there was any conscious relation to the Disney picture, but in general you'd have to say that in terms of the tools supplied to those who followed him, Disney was to animation what Griffith was to live action. Almost all the tools were discovered at Disney's; they were the only ones who had the money, and who could and did take the time to experiment. Donald Graham gave lectures to future animators at Disney's. There was one on distant action and one on secondary action—secondary action being those instances when a character comes to a sudden stop and his hair moves out on its own, without the volition of the character. A primary action is when you move your head, and a secondary action is what happens to your hairset.



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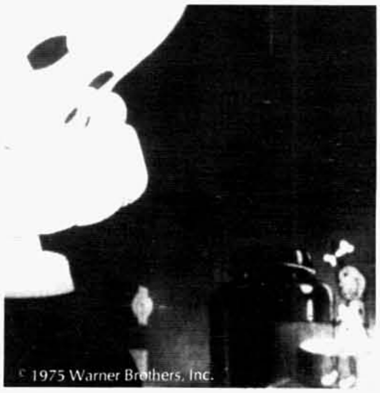

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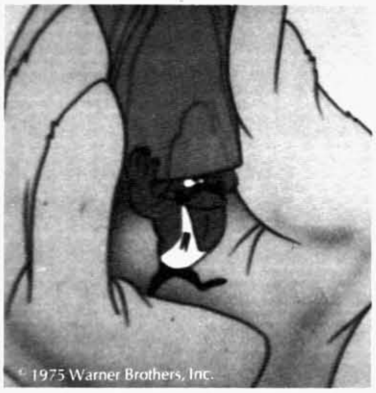

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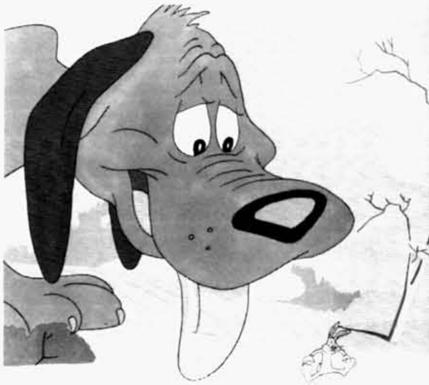


Q: That's certainly very evident in FANTASIA.

A: In "The Sorceror's Apprentice" sequence there was a tremendous amount of secondary action because Mickey was fitted in such a big costume that when he stopped the suit would swirl around him. Of course, I used this a lot in the "Roadrunner" series as the bird stops and the dust continues to go by.

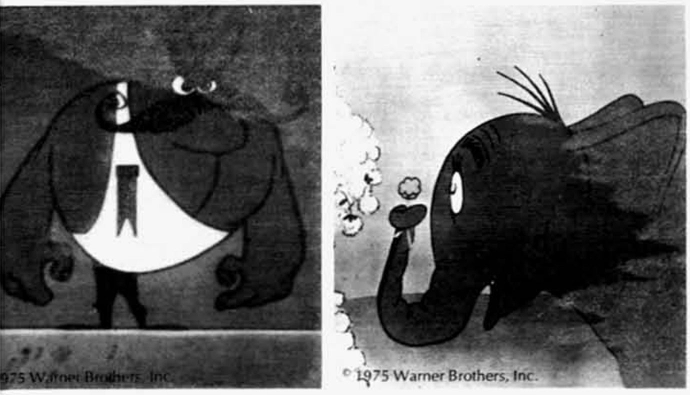
Q: Despite the obvious influences that Disney has had on your cartoons, many of them seem to satires or parodies of Disney.

A: Right. Well, Disney himself never went in for satire. I don't think he understood it very well. WHAT'S OPERA, DOC? can be looked upon as a satire of FANTASIA. I never made a cartoon which didn't contain some flick-of-the-wrist at the establishment of the day; the Disney people seldom did that, of course.

Q: BROOMSTICK BUNNY [1956] changes the concept into who's the ugliest one of all instead of who's the fairest one of all, *à la* SNOW WHITE.

A: The witch in BROOMSTICK BUNNY was so afraid of getting pretty, and she tried to get rid of Bug's ugliness.

Q: It has a great deal of abstract variation on Bugs' usual character shape. At the end he looks like a stick with a head stuck on top, and the head is almost nothing but eyes as Bugs makes with that ultimate pathetic expression.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Miniaturization. From left: JOE GLOW THE FIREFLY (1941); PORKY'S MIDNIGHT MATINEE (1941); Mighty Angelo, the pugnacious flea in TO ITCH HIS OWN (1958); Bugs with Frisky Puppy in LUMBERJACK BUNNY (1955); the Mighty Angelo, HORTON HEARS A WHO (1971).

A: My characters often used the exaggerated "soulful eyes" with the gooey, oversized centers—the "old soulful eyes routine"—to get themselves out of a jam. I think I first used that in a "Charlie Dog" cartoon, LITTLE ORPHAN AIREDALE [1947].

THE "ROADRUNNER" SERIES; "WOLF AND SHEEPDOG" SERIES; JONES' "TOM AND JERRY"

Q: I'd like to talk about the rules and disciplines you applied to individual series. You said in *Psychology Today* that the more rules you applied to the "Roadrunner" series, for instance, the funnier the films were.

A: Well, if you sit down to paint a picture, and you spread out on a table every color you can buy in a paint store, you'll find it very difficult to select *the* color that will be of any use to you. But if you take arbitrarily, say, yellow or green or a particular shade of blue, you can paint a pretty good picture—because the fact of painting a picture depends more on you and not so much on the tools available. You can paint a very good picture of a green meadow without any green paint. You might substitute white for green and then surround it with brown, using colors very sparingly. It will still look springlike.

Everyone I've ever respected always used restricted tools. The greatest comedians were the ones who wore the simplest costumes and worked in prescribed areas—such as Chaplin. So it just became evident after a while that the narrower the discipline in the "Roadrunner" series—for instance, that there was no dialogue, that the Roadrunner wouldn't hurt the Coyote, and that the Coyote would be victimized by his own ineptitude—the better it got.

Q: Could you compare the "Roadrunner" series with the "Tom and Jerry" series which you took over in 1964? They seem similar enough that there might be some overlap in concept.

A: I wasn't really at home with the Tom and Jerry characters. Hanna-Barbara handled those characters beautifully, much better than I did. Jerry was a much more charming character in their best cartoons than I could ever make him, simply because I could never understand him. And I couldn't really draw Tom very well; I had to turn him into a different cat really. So I purposely said, "The hell with him." And I tried to keep Jerry attractive personally, more like the Roadrunner, in that he never really hurt Tom in my version. Bill and Joe's Jerry would sometimes cut Tom into slices. It became sort of half-assed with my Tom becoming a combination of the Coyote and the original Tom. It's difficult to work with someone else's characters.

Q: You've used the same Coyote character in many different ways—which way do you think he operates best?

A: The Coyote really represents three different characters: he's one character in the "Wolf and Sheepdog" series . . .

Q: His name's Ralph, Ralph Wolf, and as he and the sheepdog pass each other on the way to work, they punch in together at the timeclock . . .

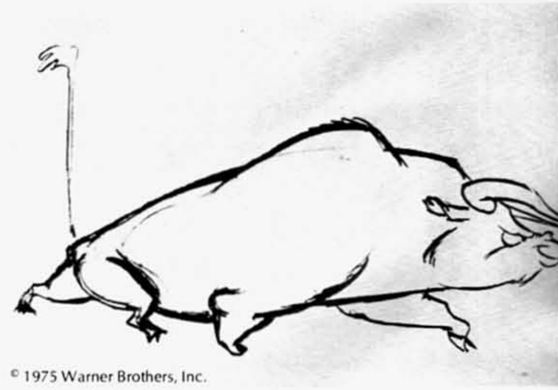
A: And they say, "Hello, Ralph," "Hello, Sam." So in the "Sheepdog" series he's one character, when he's working with Bugs he's a completely different character, and when he's working with the Roadrunner he's a completely different character. He *looks* the same, I admit. I don't know, I liked the shape of him. It's like the same actor playing three different parts in live-action films.

Q: Of course, there are elements of personality that overlap from one series to another. The Coyote who works with Bugs Bunny *is* different because he has a voice and dialogue, but he's like the Coyote who chases the Roadrunner in his obsession with his own machinations. In OPERATION: RABBIT [1954], the Coyote draws up various inventions at a draftsman's table—"Plan One: Pressure Cooker; Plan Two: Explosive Decoy; Plan Three: Flying Saucer." He's obviously hung up with himself in a smug, self-congratulatory kind of way.

A: The last scene in that was one of my all-time favorite gags. The Coyote is in the munitions shed, filling up Bugs's carrots with nitroglycerin, complimenting himself on his idea, while behind him, through the window in the background, you see the train coming toward him. But the Coyote doesn't pay any attention; he just continues screwing the carrot-tops back in place, and thinks he's so smart, saying to himself, "'Wile E. Coyote: Super-Genius.' I like the way that rolls out—'Wile E. Coyote: Super-Genius.'" This Coyote's a type of very shabby egotist, because he has that exaggerated self-confidence that he refuses to lose.

Q: But isn't this trait carried over from the Coyote in the "Roadrunner" series, that same love for his own schemes and devices?

A: Oh yeah, but the whole thing is changed. In the films with the Coyote and the Roadrunner, the entire situation is more desperate. The Coyote here isn't merely an egotist; he's almost possessed, he's a fanatic. And now I realize, it was only in the earlier cartoons that I made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The bull in BULLY FOR BUGS (1953).

CHUCK JONES CONTINUED

much of a point about the Coyote wanting to eat the Roadrunner. Later on, even that didn't seem to matter any more, and the Coyote's motivation became even more generalized: all he wanted to do was *get* him, or something, because his dignity was shot.

Q: And eventually, in the last of the series, even the Roadrunner bird himself seems superfluous to the series. For example, he hardly makes an appearance in TO BEEP OR NOT TO BEEP [1964], as the Coyote spends more than half of the film trying to operate one single catapult, an instrument which was originally *intended* to get the bird.

A: Right—the catapult itself achieves a sort of perverseness, a personality of its own.

Q: There's a general difference between the "spot-gag" cartoons and the narrative cartoons.

A: The difference is in the relationship of timing, pacing, and hitting the proper length for the film without going over the budget. If a spot-gag film was too long, you could just lift out a gag and save if for the next film.

Q: But the "Roadrunner" films, though spot-gag films, are definitely *structured* works. They don't have a narrative structure, but they're far more than strings of unrelated gags.

A: I evolved a kind of rhythm to them, which sometimes had to do with planting a gag which reappear in a "poster ending"—in ZOOM AND BORED, for example. I'd have three or four of the Roadrunner's nerve-wracking "beep-beeps" at the opening, in rapid succession to prepare the audience for more. But by the end of the film the Coyote, poor bastard, was so shaken that I didn't have the heart to let the Roadrunner send him off the cliff. So when the Roadrunner comes up behind the Coyote, he holds up a sign saying "I DON'T HAVE THE HEART." Then sometimes, in other Roadrunner films, I'd use a different kind of running gag, a cumulative gag, like the dynamite cartoon . . .

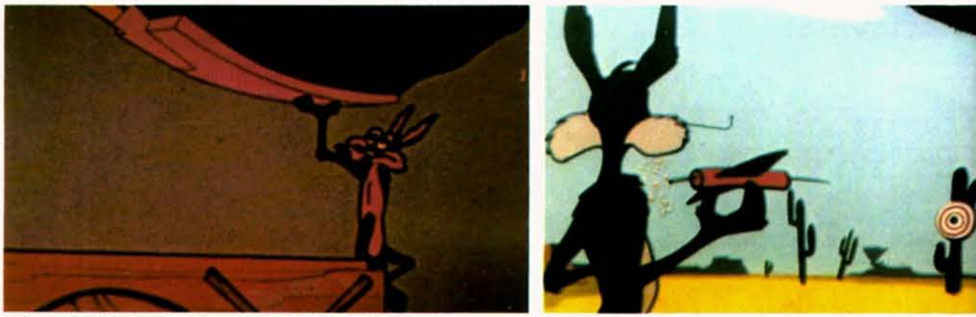
Q: You mean LICKETY SPLAT [1961]? That one has the Coyote in a balloon, toward the beginning, unloosing these hundreds of flying dart-shaped dynamite sticks . . .

A: Yeah, then at the end of every scene that followed afterward, one of the little darts, left over from this first gag, would come in and explode. Or sometimes I'd go through a number of very simple visual jokes, fast-like, saving a very long gag for the end, like when the Coyote swallows the Earthquake Pills in HOPALONG CASUALTY. But there *is* a structure. It isn't, as it may appear in the beginning, a series of spot-gags without relationship to one another. I'd alternate, say, a gag which would let the audience in on what was going to happen, where the surprise might be in *how* it would happen, with a scene that would get a laugh from something that the audience couldn't have the remotest idea would happen.

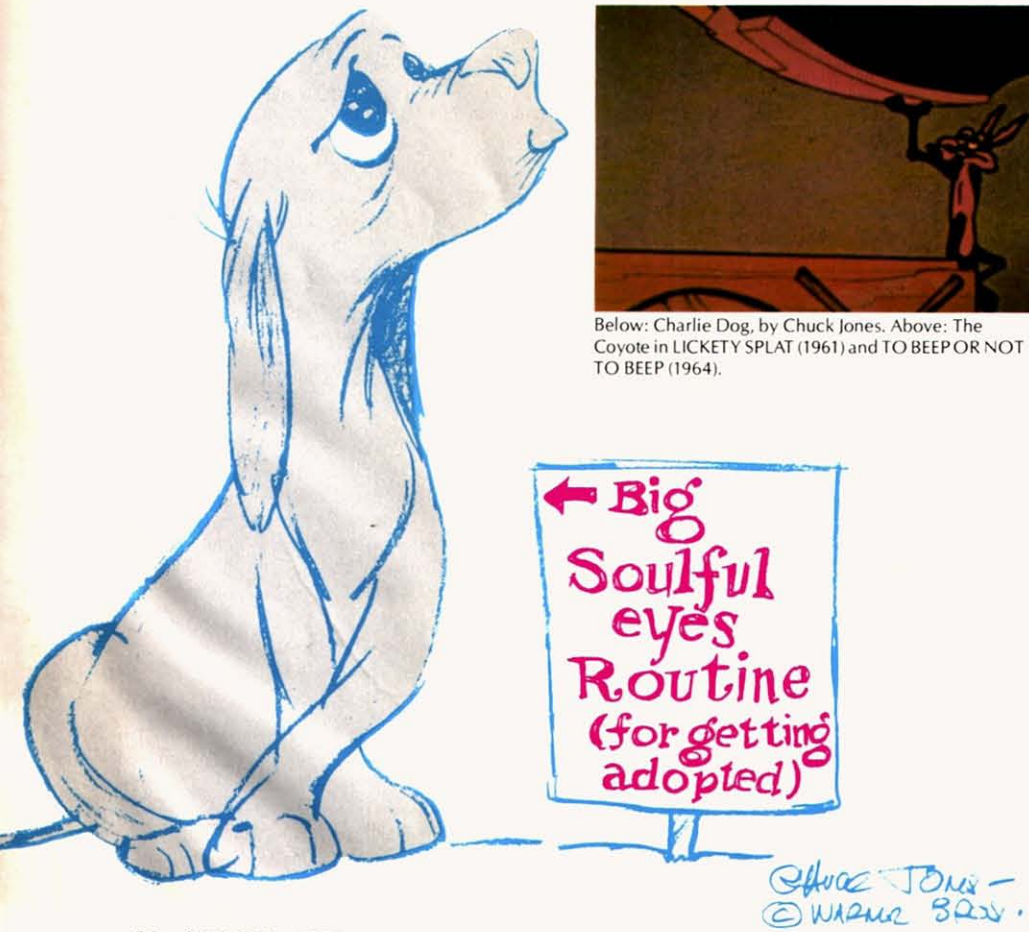
Q: Explosions seem to be very important to you. There is a use of explosions in your work, more so than in the work of other animators, that releases a lot of the tension which results from the extreme pacing.

A: That's probably true—I got to a point where I needed something to release all this tension. But also, to me, an explosion is best used not as a dramatic device in itself but as a point or an idea in the comic sequence. An example is the cartoon where the Coyote built a fantastic, long trough up the side of the mountain [ZOOM AND BORED]. You didn't know what he was going to do with it, but the camera panned up and you saw all the work he put into it and how delicately the trough was balanced on the rocks. By the time the camera finally got to the top and the Coyote lit the fuse to the dynamite, it wasn't even proper to let the fuse burn down. The second the Coyote lit the match, the whole thing exploded. BOOM!! Immediately. The humor is not in the explosion at all, but in the fact that the guy obviously worked for hours and hours and weeks and weeks on the damn trough.

A.C. Gamer, who did some of the best special effects we had, concocted a big, beautiful explosion with curlicues and stars splaying out. It was a marvelous thing, and it was based on a discovery we made around the time of DRAFT HORSE: that there were mechanics to an explosion we hadn't know about. Before, we always supposed that an explosion would go out fast, so we'd make a small drawing, and then a bigger one, and then a bigger one, taking maybe three frames to spread out. Well, when you think about it, you realize that it couldn't conceivably be that way, because each frame was one-twenty-fourth of a second. This meant that it would take three-twenty-fourths of a second to get the full effect, which was far too much time. So, by studying some live-action explosions, we discovered that the brightest frame was the very first one. That became evident to everyone later, of course, with the documentary footage on atomic bomb explosions, which actually went all white at first, and then faded down a little bit until you began to see the mushroom. So what we would do was to



Below: Charlie Dog, by Chuck Jones. Above: The Coyote in LICKETY SPLAT (1961) and TO BEEP OR NOT TO BEEP (1964).


← Big Soulful eyes Routine (for getting adopted)
Chuck Jones —
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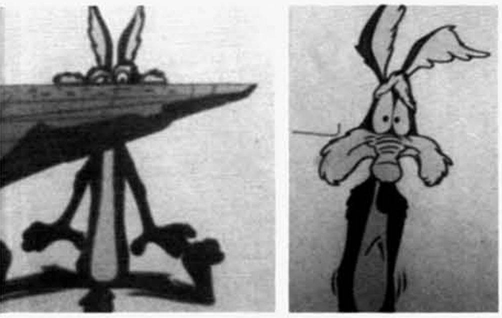
take the explosion to its furthest point at the first frame, and then take a few frames to diminish. I later applied that principle to more minor, less violent actions: if someone simply got socked in the jaw, the most extreme drawing would be the first one, and then we'd diminish it.

Q: I'd like to know more about the less known but very remarkable "Wolf and Sheepdog" series.

A: I got the idea for that series at about the same time I made a one-shot film with Mike Maltese called GO FLY A KIT [1957]. There were these large-scale arguments going on, as to which was the more important conditioning factor: environment or heredity. Well, I would guess that both of them are important, and nobody really knows. But it got to the point where it was so idiotic—the young people were rearing their children either with *all* environment or *all* heredity in mind. I felt that, OK, it's absurd, so let's make it really absurd and go on the supposition that an adopted cat raised by an eagle would obviously be able to fly.

The same thing would hold true for the "Wolf and Sheepdog" series, I thought. Just as human beings go to work, punch their cards down and become at that point, say, bus drivers—a bus driver isn't a bus driver on his way to work, he's only a bus driver then he gets in the bus. And I thought, if that's true of human beings, why can't it be true of animals? A snake isn't a snake until he goes and punches in in the morning. And a wolf and sheepdog could be very good friends, real buddies, up to the point that they punch in, the factory whistle blows, and they do what they're being paid to do.



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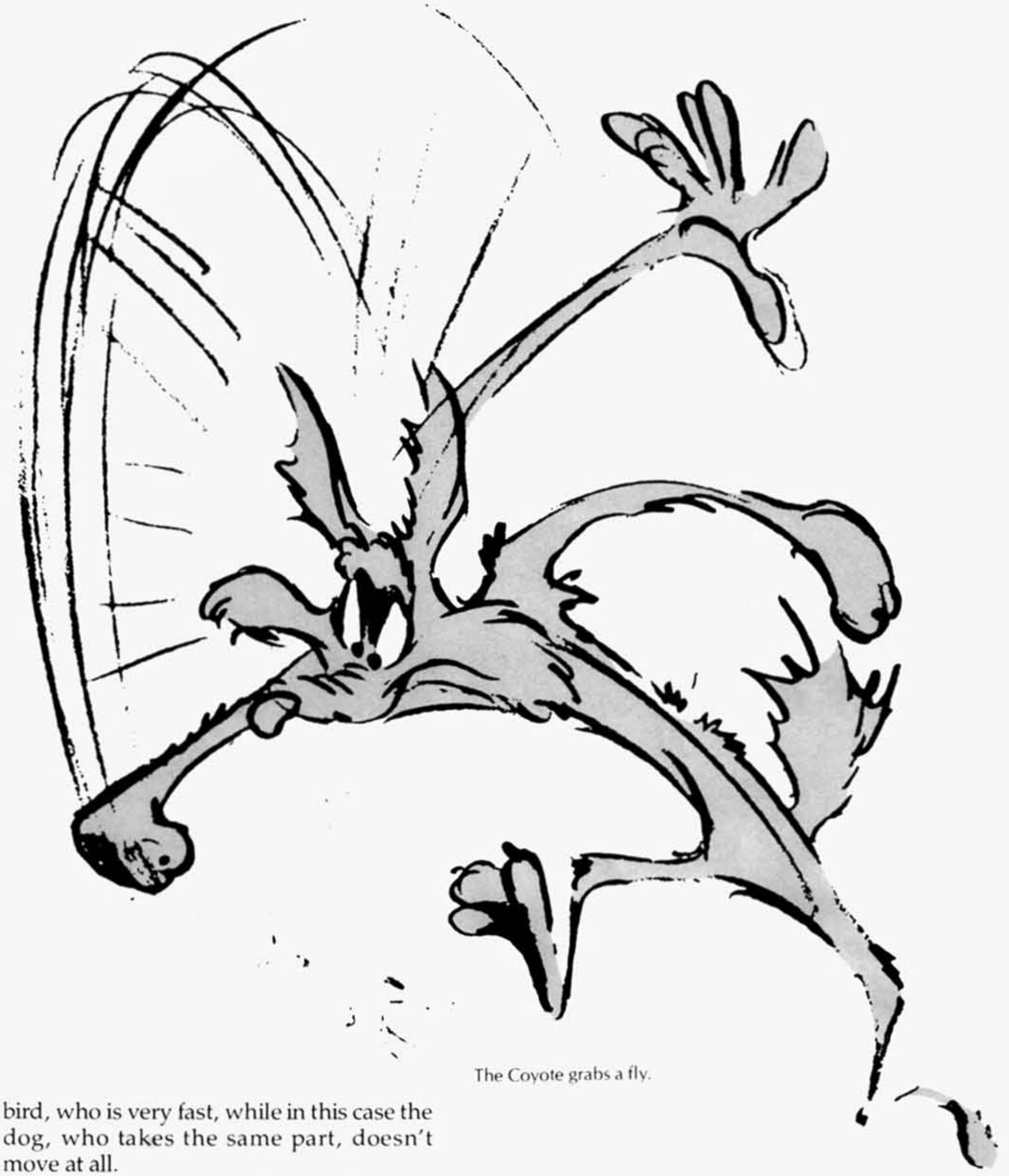
Q: Once you mentioned that the "Roadrunner" series began as a satire on the usual kind of character-conflict in cartoons, the Coyote being a purely intellectual and motivated character, while the Roadrunner bird is completely unmotivated, a natural or nearly supernatural character. You have a similar classic dichotomy here, with the Wolf and Sheepdog. And then there's the fact that the Wolf and Sheepdog are antagonists only after the whistle blows, which seems to indicate a satirization of typical cartoon character clashes.

A: It may have been an underlying thing. Although in this case, you have one person with the object of protecting the sheep and this is the major difference in the series. You have the Wolf who wants to gather up the sheep, and the Sheepdog who wants to keep the sheep together. This is quite a different things from protecting yourself, which is the concept that the "Roadrunner" series dealt with. To me, it's a more sympathetic situation, and therefore the means of protection could be a little more dramatic, a little stronger. And visually, come to thing of it, the Sheepdog is the exact opposite of the Roadrunner bird, who is very fast, while in this case the dog, who takes the same part, doesn't move at all.



The Coyote grabs a fly.

Q: He just appears on the cut, from nowhere.

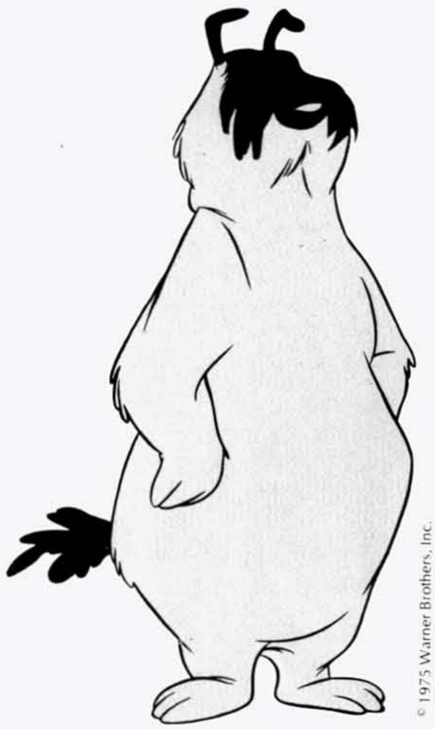
A: Yes, with an almost magical quality.

Q: And in this series, the Sheepdog actively clobbers the Wolf all the time—it can get pretty severe. In STEAL WOOL [1957], for example, the Wolf is squished pancake-flat and gets punched in the nose, leaving his snout accordian-crinkled.

A: Maybe the fact that there was little action otherwise indicated that there should be stronger pieces of dramatic business than there would ever be in the Roadrunner-Coyote cycle, where you always have plenty of action, even when nothing's really happening. A lot of my explanations are dependent on the stylistic problems that I was trying to solve at the time.

Q: I find these cartoons very moving. They always suggested to me a kind of duplicity involved in jobs, an alienation-from-self, the necessary compromises that people must make certain jobs—that sort of assumption of a disguise, within a disguise, within a disguise, within a disguise. The climax of this occurs in SHEEP IN THE DEEP [1962], where you pictorialized first a wolf in sheep's clothing, which turned out to be a sheepdog in wolf's clothing, which turned out to be a sheep in sheepdog's clothing, and so forth.

A: Yes, I enjoyed that. It just kept going forever. But that really is always true, and in a way, I suppose, it's a sort of satire on



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The Sheepdog.

the idea that working people experience a great difference between life as it is socially, and as it is when you get to work. For instance, if two people walk into a room and one sits down behind a desk, the one person becomes the power, and the other person becomes the subject of that power.

Q: This relationship is completely arbitrary—and how much did they change over the years? Not much, except that you eventually added a lunch-break for the warring characters.

A: That's right. The beginning and the end of the cartoons remained the same, but employee conditions improved in the interim.

PORKY PIG

Q: How do you see Porky in relation to the other characters?

A: Porky began as a child, and grew up along the way. But to decide what the disciplines were with the Porky character is impossible. He tended to change with each series he appeared in. He was kind of square, I suppose; but you always felt, in a movie like DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24½ CENTURY, that he had his tongue in his cheek. There was always some sly awareness. For instance in DUCK DODGERS, Daffy is so caught up in his crusade—his assignment to find a supply of Aludium Phosdex, the shaving-cream atom—that by the end, he has succeeded only in obliterating the entire alien planet and goes on to claim the remaining crumbling mound in the name of Earth. Then we pan down to Porky, hanging off the edge of the thing and saying "B-b-b-b-big deal!"

Q: More often than not, you've used Porky as supporting-player rather than star. He's an "eager young space cadet" to Daffy's "Duck Dodgers." In the Westerns, he's even subtitled a "Comedy Relief" to Daffy's "Western-type Hero," with little absurdist labels resembling the Latinate captions you always use for the Roadrunner and Coyote.

A: I thought Porky was at his best as the "Fat Friar" in ROBIN HOOD DAFFY [1958]. I did hundreds of layouts on that—I got so infatuated with that fat-assed character. That whole picture I enjoyed very much.

Q: And it's very well designed. You once told me that you knew Eugene Pallette.

A: Oh, yes, Pallette was a good friend of mine—he used to stay and live with us all the time. Of course we'd also see Fairbanks occasionally, and the mannerisms of these people would affect you, they were such strong personalities. I guess that helps, unconsciously. Actors like Flynn were really holdovers from that earlier era. Flynn wasn't quite an original. Daffy was really parodying Fairbanks there, more than Flynn. Daffy's swashbuckling poses were exaggerations of the way that Fairbanks moved. His body had strong, dramatic actions to it.

Q: Pallette is very strongly evoked as Porky falls over laughing at Daffy's buffoonery, out of control, with that great animation of his jelly-like stomach bounding, thumping up and down.

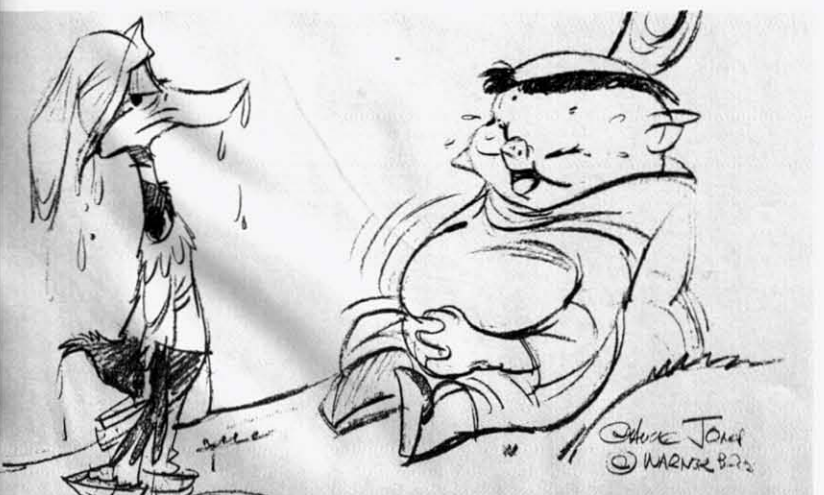
A: And Daffy says, disgustedly, "How jolly can you get?" That stomach *was* good. Abe Levitow animated that. I'd say that that was his first really good piece of animation.

Q: I'm very fond of the horror-show-type series with Porky and Sylvester, where the character construction seems to be one of Sylvester's paranoia versus Porky Pig's complacency. My favorite is the second, CLAWS FOR ALARM [1955], where Sylvester is terrorized by these rascally mice armed with axes, chopping blocks, nooses, guillotines, but Porky remains entirely unaware and, through blindness or dumb luck, always emerges unharmed.

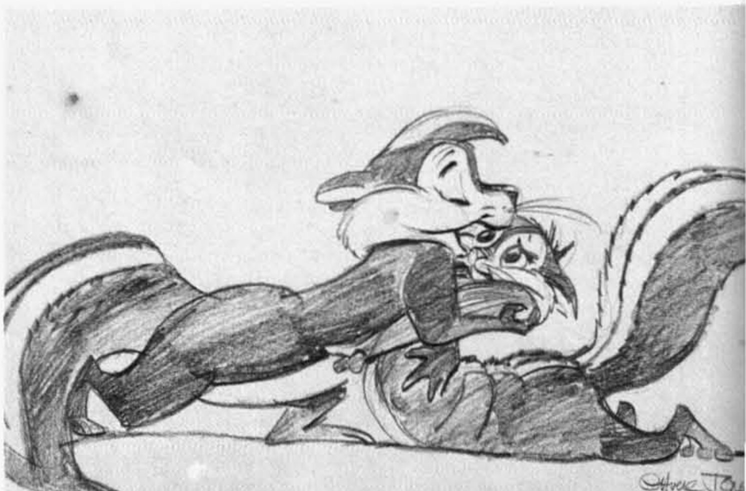
A: There you have a very logical Porky—he's not a dope, but he's certainly very naïve in the sense that he doesn't see what's happening. The cat is determined to protect him, and victimizes himself in the process. You might say that this is a variation of the "singing frog" situation, in that whatever happens, there's no evidence of it. This one guy had the privilege, or the curse, of seeing the singing frog, but when other people looked at it, it stopped doing its song-and-dance.

In CLAWS FOR ALARM—as well as in the first in this series, SCAREDY CAT [1948]—this poor cat is trying to save Porky's life all the time, but he always appears to be taking Porky's life, poor devil. The lights go on, and there's Sylvester, caught in the midst of a protective act, but seeming to be the guilty party, holding the knife or razor blade to Porky's throat, while the guilty mice are hidden somewhere. Somehow the funniest thing is that Porky isn't even alarmed by this—he doesn't believe Sylvester has the courage to do it. He sees Sylvester holding the razor, but he doesn't really take it seriously. He just says, "You psychopathical pussyca—you psychopa—you psychopa—you manic-depressive cat, you." Porky's voice always drops at the end, I don't know why, so when you say "you cat, you," that little "you" at the end drops down about three notes.

Q: In JUMPIN' JUPITER, the last of the series, Porky and Sylvester are threatened by a fantastic Martian: a Dr. Suess-like bird, consisting entirely of smooth, curved lines. There's another Martian, in DUCK DODGERS, with a



Robin Hood Daffy and Porky, the "Fat Friar," in ROBIN HOOD DAFFY (1958), by Chuck Jones.



Pepe Le Pew and his inamorata, by Chuck Jones.

Roman Legion-type helmet, tennis shoes, and just a black circle for a head—no facial features at all except two large oval eyes.

A: That was one of the first times I discovered you could get on easily enough without mouth action. You can convince people that the little Martian is speaking simply through the way he moves, and with that funny, meek Richard Haydn kind of voice—innocent, harmless, and saying things like "I'm going to blow up the Earth, as it obstructs my view of Venus."

Q: It was a Porky cartoon that introduced Charlie Dog, that very aggressive mutt who feels that he has to ingratiate himself to a master. He continually finds unwilling masters, but keeps going to great lengths to find a home. In one cartoon, DOGGONE SOUTH [1950], he tries to befriend a plantation owner and so adopts a Southern accent, eats chitterlings and cornpone, the whole works. In LITTLE ORPHAN AIREDALE, he actually fakes pregnancy to win over a master, even though the dog's name is Charlie.

A: Right. Porky finds out the dog is male, throws him out, then Charlie pops right in again to testify: "Well, there *was* such a case in Venezuela." I loved that line. Then there's the one that takes place in Italy, where Charlie tries to break into a pizza parlor, trumping up an Italian dialect. Yes, I always liked that dog, that eager dog. He's kind of a chauvinist dog, or a salesman dog—always trying to bell himself, advertise himself. But that's really what dogs are. They'll butter you up, lick your foot, die on your grave.

PEPE LE PEW

Q: What would you say the basic discipline is in the Pepe Le Pew series?

A: That was miscegenation, obviously. After all, what's a mule but a hunk of miscegenation? This is involuntary miscegenation, which is a slightly different thing. Pepe thought the girl was a female skunk while in reality she was a female cat, and she could never understand why she was being followed, you see. I mean, from her viewpoint, it was miscegenation, while from his viewpoint, it certainly wasn't.

The other thing is that Pepe always represented the other side of my personality, because he represented what I *wanted* to be, and what I think every man would like to be: irresistible, at least in one's own eyes. You don't have to be irresist ble in women's eyes if you *think* you are. As for Pepe, he got plenty, you might say. But it never occurred to him that he had offended anyone. He was never fazed, under any circumstances.

In the first cartoon [FOR SCENT-IMENTAL REASONS, 1949], there was a pantomime sequence where the girl is hiding inside a glass case and Pepe is outside, and she is saying [imitates female cat's pantomime of disgust, holding hand to nose] and he goes [imitates Pepe's soundless, shocked/upset reaction]. So he pulls out a gun and walks off, the cat quickly running out, feeling bad about this presumable suicide. It turns out that Pepe is completely all right, of course, wasn't the slightest bit deterred. He just takes the girl in his arms again, saying "Fortunately for you, I meesed." It's that complete self-assurance. With the Coyote of the "Roadrunner" series, I understood him because he made so many mechanical mistakes, which is natural for anybody, particularly for me. But Pepe was the super character, a super sex-job, and he knew it. And he never gave up.

Q: Where do you suppose the audience identification goes in those cartoons? Toward Pepe or toward the female cat?

A: I've never been able to discover that, because all the girls I've ever known adore the Pepe character as a sex-object, you might say—he was really irresistible.

One of my favorites was WILD OVER YOU [1953], because there Pepe's mistaken desire was this enormous wildcat, and the situation furnished some good remarks—"Acres and acres of her, and she's mine, all mine." I liked the end-line. The wildcat is ferociously fighting Pepe off in a balloon floating away into the distance, and she's clawing the hell out of him. You can't quite tell what was going on, just a big mess, a big brawl in the distance, and then we cut back to a close-up of Pepe, looking up at the viewer and saying, "Eef you haff not tried eet, do not knock eet."

Q: At times, Pepe Le Pew is pretty overt, as far as sex goes.

A: Well, he's overt, but that's an honest love for a woman . . . I can't see anything wrong with that.

Q: Something one can respect, something one can understand.

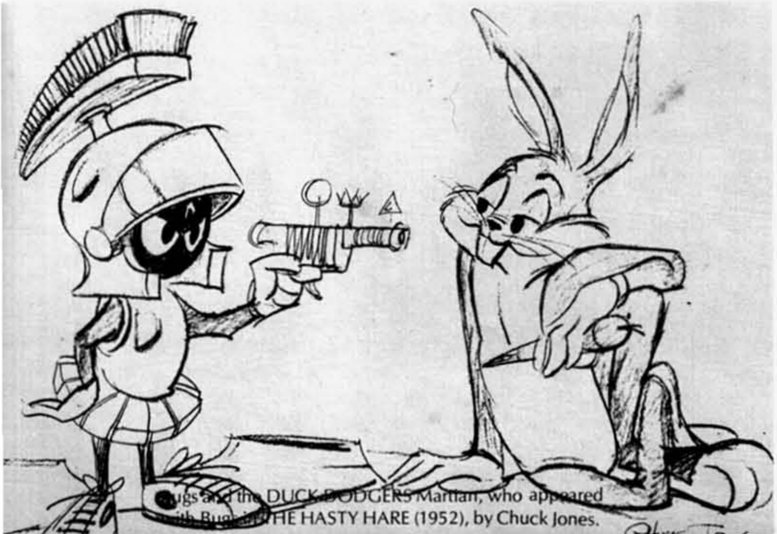
A: That's what I thought, anyway. The entire cat-mouse cartoon cycle, the chase cycle, might be called "oral" today. But in those days, it was a matter of eating somebody, like a cat eating a mouse. Nourishment. Sustenance. Survival. Today, if you say that a character is going to eat somebody—well, it has a different meaning. But the skunk Pepe was unique in chase cartoons of the period in the sense that he was after the cat, well, to screw her, I suppose. He says, "She theenks by playing hard-to-get she can make herself more attractive to me—*how right she eez!*" And "Not every man would put up with thees—lucky for her, I am not any man."

Q: Are all his feminine foils cats instead of other skunks?

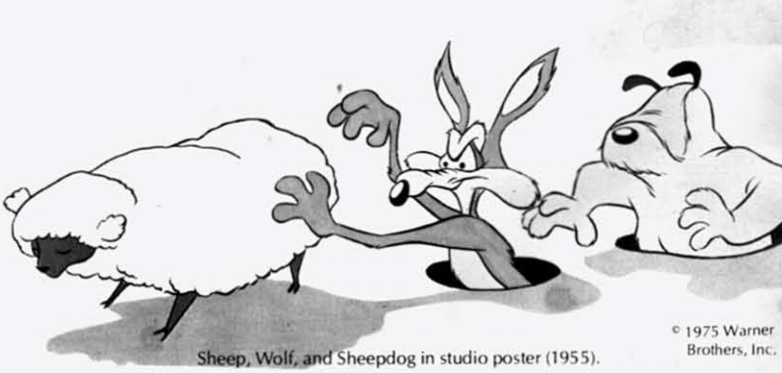
A: They had to be. Another skunk wouldn't make any sense, because the other skunk would go for him, so where's the comedy? So there always had to be a ploy of getting a white stripe accidentally down a cat's back, which, I can tell you, got a little tiresome trying to figure out. It was strange since the audience never objected to the implausibility of having it happen again and again, film after film.

Q: It's very graceful in CATS-BAH [1955], where the guy is painting the hull of a ship, and a lady passenger comes down the gangplank with her pet cat on a leash, and some of the paint sloshes on the cat. It's also the film where the seduction story is structured with an "As Time Goes By" CASABLANCA-like flashback. But why, if Pepe is irresistible to other skunks, would a cat resist him?

A: Because he *smells* bad! When I was a kid, I worked on a boat that carried creosol piling, and I don't know if you've ever been close to creosol piling, but it has a terribly strong smell. But strangely enough, in about four or five days, you forget, and everything resumes its normal smells again, except that everywhere *you* go, you notice the people reeling—*you* smell. As



Bugs and the DUCK DODGERS Martian, who appeared with Bugs in THE HASTY HARE (1952), by Chuck Jones.



Sheep, Wolf, and Sheepdog in studio poster (1955).

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far as Pepe was concerned, it really came down to that simple level of misunderstanding. Do you know what he once said? In one film he daintily sniffs his wrist and says, "Do I offend?"

Q: Pepe's one moment of self-awareness.

THE SINGING FROG

Q: In ONE FROGGY EVENING, much of the humor seems to be derived from a sharp break between anthropomorphized movement and natural animal movement.

A: It was anthropomorphic when the frog was singing and dancing and completely natural otherwise.

Q: Did you actually use a frog as a model for that?

A: I studied a frog, but I didn't actually get a real frog as I did with the squirrel in MUCH ADO ABOUT NUTTING. I was more interested in the action; I knew I could draw it. It was obvious the way the frog had to move, from the way he was drawn.

The trick was that the audience would never hear anything but the frog's singing voice. The rest is entirely pantomime. There are a lot of ways of doing this, and they all seem obvious once you look at them—putting the characters behind the plate glass window in the theatrical agency, for instance. There the timing had to work interestingly, because when the protagonist went back to get the theatrical agent, once the frog had started singing the rag, we kept the music going but you couldn't hear the voice. The phrasing works out so that the frog starts to sing, his owner runs back inside in a hurried fashion, trying to tell the agent what's happening. Subconsciously, the audience knows what he's telling him even though there are no words spoken, because the music is still being carried over. The you cut back to the frog; as the frog is finishing the song ("...that lov-ing rag!"), PLOP!!, the door opens, a guy points, the frog looks up, croaks, and the theatrical agent gives that tiny look at the audience which I often use—it's one of my favorite gags. Then you cut to the street and the frog and his owner are thrown out. By the way, did you know that Mike Maltese and I wrote "The Michigan Rag"? We needed a ragtime piece, so we wrote one.

Q: The whole cartoon seems to be in a parable structure. It's like an excessive punishment for one man's greed—for his desire to exploit the discovery of the singing frog and make millions.

A: That's right, the guy wants to join the establishment, enjoy the fruits of the establishment. And that was also one of the first of my continuing or cyclical cartoons, like HORTON HEARS A WHO, the endings of which imply that what's happened will happen again and again in the future.

Q: That certainly existed in cartoons like I WAS A TEENAGE THUMB [1963], which ends with the narrator saying "...and he had a son the size of his thumb, and he had a son the size of his thumb, etc."

A: Getting back to ONE FROGGY EVENING, it would have been easy to keep on using the Lubitsch trick, implying the action going on behind closed doors or barricades. I wanted to see if I could find other ways of conveying the same thought—as when the frog is singing in the part, and the cop is behind the wall. The cop can hear the frog. In this case, it's simply that the cop's eyes are behind the wall; by seeing the top of his head you know that he's a cop. The cop's activities are determined by the actions of his hat. And then there's the terrible time that the owner of the frog has in the theater: first getting the people in there, then having the rope to the curtain break. You have to feel sorry for the guy; he's stuck with that frog and somehow the only place he can get rid of it is back where he got it—back in the cornerstone of another building. It was really an exemplification of frustration, and it continued...

BUGS BUNNY AND DAFFY DUCK

Q: Getting back to the idea of individual disciplines for characters, what about Bugs Bunny?

A: Well, I always underwrote the idea of Bugs never being a heckler—he's minding his own business, and then somebody comes along and tries to disturb him, hurt him, destroy him. But when he fights back, he becomes an anarchist, rather like Groucho Marx.

Q: It takes a butt from a bull to antagonize him in BULLY FOR BUGS, as Bugs goes sailing over the arena declaring, "Of course, you know, this means war!"

A: That's the old Groucho Marx line, and it certainly became basic to Bugs' character. A cross between Harpo and Groucho is what he'd become at that point: he had the intellect of Groucho combined with the zaniness and oddity of Harpo, which I never understood—I'm sure Harpo himself never understood it. In other words, Bugs' behavior would often surprise himself. He never knew what he was going to do next. Another important rule was that we always started him out in an environment natural for a rabbit.

Q: With or without banjo, *à la* LONG-HAIRED HARE?

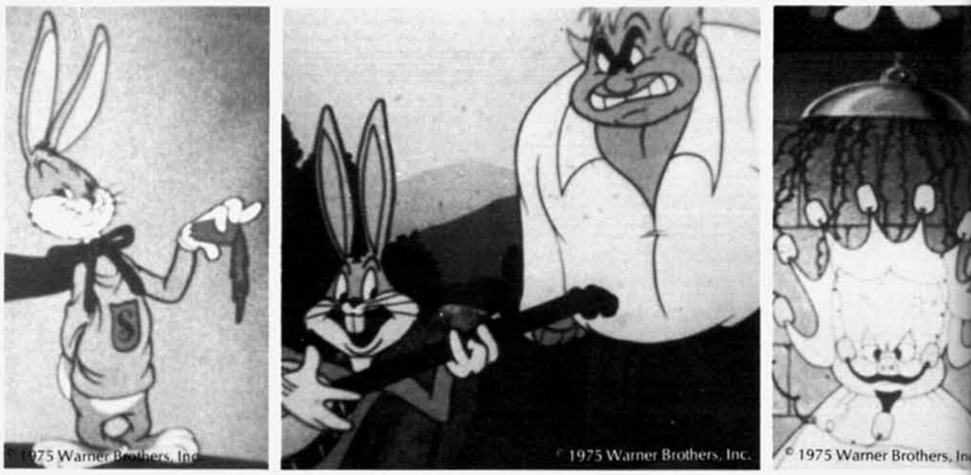
A: Well, that was a slight exception—but he *did* have his feet in his rabbit-hole and he *was* out in the woods, remember? Sitting there playing the banjo the way *any* rabbit would under the same circumstances. And that, to me, was always very important. Next came the provocation, and the provocation is always based upon a guy who is minding his own business.

Q: In LONG-HAIRED HARE's musical language, Bugs Bunny, on the one side, seems to represent the popular, singing pop songs or folk songs, while the opera-singer, on the other side, represents the classical, or in this case, the pretentious. Where did you find the voice for the opera basso?

A: We found a young singer with a terribly strong voice. And remember Bugs' revenge on the opera-singer? The singer's performing at the Hollywood Bowl and Bugs is perched on top of it. Bugs tests the Bowl first, saying "Hmmm...acoustically poi-fect!" Then he causes the whole thing to vibrate, bouncing the singer down below. We had to do something similar to our actual singer. We told him, "We're not going to hurt you, but something may happen to you while you're singing. Whatever happens, keep singing." So while he was recording at the microphone, we snuck up behind him, grabbed him and shook him. His voice did just what you hear on the soundtrack.

Q: I thing SUPER RABBIT holds up very well among your earliest Bugs cartoons.

A: In fact, it was one of the first cartoons where I got a real feeling for Bugs, which I had some trouble doing for a little while. That was one of the first times I got a hold on the character, and on the way he would later develop, for me at least. You could see



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From left: Bugs in SUPER RABBIT (1943); with the opera singer in LONG HAIRED HARE (1948); Porky as Claude Rains in THE SCARLET PUMPERNICKEL (1950).

he was really *enjoying* himself, which I enjoyed.

Q: Well, he certainly seems to enjoy himself during that great scene where the villains try to blast him with the cannon. And this, too, is a Marx Brothers bit, in the way that Bugs imposes a completely foreign discipline on the ominous situation: staging a basketball game with the cannonball, turning the hunters into a rooting section.

A: The only reservation that I might have about SUPER RABBIT was that it had an ending that only related to that particular time, and that particular war effort in 1942, when Bugs goes off to join the Marines.

Q: What sort of disciplines would there be in Daffy Duck cartoons?

A: Well, Bugs and Daffy actually started out very similarly . . . they both began as raving lunatics. Daffy eventually became a self-preservationalist. It was really his job to save his own life.

Q: But he's always showing off so much.

A: Well, he's a show-off too, but basically he was concerned with taking care of himself. Friz Freleng and I used a competition between Bugs and Daffy throughout the "Bugs Bunny Show" TV series. All through it, Daffy was trying to get to be master-of-ceremonies, but Bugs got all the applause. This sort of thing would drive Daffy nuts. Daffy always wanted to be triumphant, in whatever he did, but in some cases, all that meant was having to survive, and he was always apologizing. He'd stand there and say: "Pain hurts me," "I may be a cowardly little black duck, but I'm a *live* little black duck," or "What a shitty thing to do." We often wrote Daffy's dialogue with four-letter words, and then we'd abridge it later.

Q: It seems that Daffy is often cast in ambitious parts that he's always unequal to, Errol Flynn-type romantic leads.

A: I don't know why ROBIN HOOD DAFFY worked so well. But there you have a straight parody. There he did not act, as usual, the part of a self-preservationist, but he did want people to believe he was Sherlock Holmes, or Robin Hood, or whoever, so he was still trying to establish the fact that he had a right to be there.

Q: Would you say that role-playing, then, was central to Daffy's character?

A: That's certainly one important aspect, but then there are many pictures where he plays just the part of Daffy Duck. The very early ones don't really count, since he had yet to completely develop his character. Just as you think of Jack Benny as being a very miserly person, so Daffy is miserly regarding his own life. Of course he can't stand loss of dignity, that's another aspect.

Q: There's a brilliant sequence in ROBIN HOOD DAFFY, very sad in a way. Daffy has a heroic line to deliver before he performs some athletic feat of derring-do, screaming "Yoicks, and away!", swinging on a vine, and smashing right into a large tree. He keeps saying "Yoicks, and away!" over and over, crashing into a new tree each time, his voice getting more and more tired. Wasn't this the cartoon where Daffy's beak kept springing up?

A: Yes, it was. Manny Farber called it "a token of Daffy's ineptitude," or something.

Q: Genre-parodies often come up in Daffy Duck cartoons.

A: Very often. I liked to do that. I did one on Jack Webb, sort of a Dragnet-in-Outer-Space cartoon, called ROCKET SQUAD. I would say the basic discipline there was to be as true to the original style as possible, accenting the comic qualities of the particular genre all the while. As in ROCKET SQUAD: "Thursday—4:05—P.M.—I struck a match—Thursday—4:05 and a quarter—P.M.—I lit a cigarette."

Q: In THE SCARLET PUMPERNICKEL [1950], you exaggerate, to just the right degree, the Michael Curtiz-type grandiose set decoration and use of shadow, all those very romantic trappings of costume epics.

A: There were a lot of in-house jokes in that cartoon—mostly in the casting. We put on the Mother Bear from those earlier "Three Bears" cartoons I did [BEAR FOR PUNISHMENT, BEE-DEVILLED BRUIN, etc.] and Henery Hawk appeared briefly as a messenger—it was an epic, so all my characters had to be in it. Everybody appreciated it except Jack Warner, and I don't think he ever realized we were talking about him in the cartoon.

Q: Daffy was trying to sell a script to Warner, the script providing the mock-epic story, the cartoon-within-a- cartoon.

A: Daffy was no great writer, of course, so the thing had to end with one clichéd disaster after another: "Then, the dam broke!" "Then, the volcano erupted!" "Then, the price of food skyrocketed!" —while pictured on the screen was one kreplach with a pricetag of $1000. The ultimate catastrophe. We end it with Daffy shooting himself, saying "It's getting so you have to kill yourself to sell a story around here!"

Q: And DRIP-ALONG DAFFY [1951] parodied the high-angle shots generally used for classic HIGH NOON gundowns.

A: The thing that made that work was the distant sound the horse made. I used the distant spur-jangling sound too, even though the characters weren't wearing any spurs.

Q: It seems to me there's a great deal of FROM A TO ZZZZ's Walter Mitty-ish Ralph Phillips character in Daffy, in his naïve desire to actually live out these heroic fantasies.

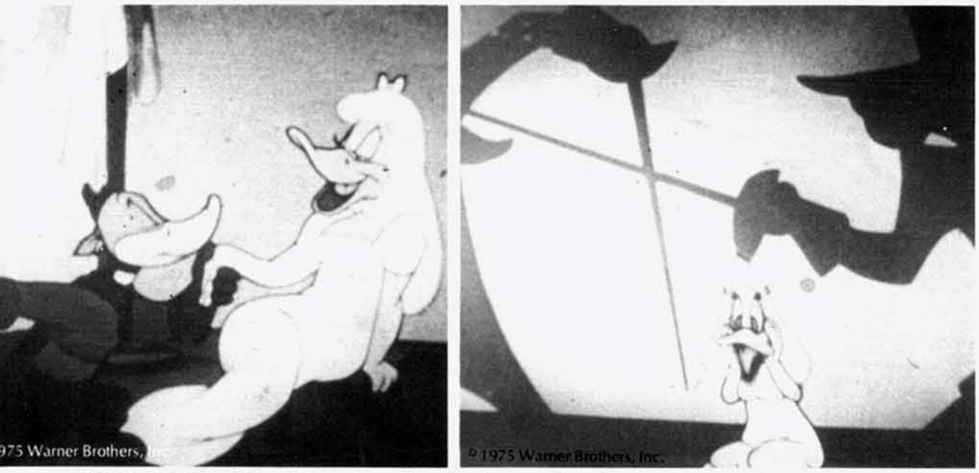
A: That's right, Daffy's an innocent, he's an ingenuous character. Not only when he is playing parts, but in a straight situation: all he wants to do is survive, and be triumphant, without having to do the work that was necessary, and without having to be particularly nice.

Q: In DRIP-ALONG DAFFY, Daffy first rides into the Western town, sees the sign that a sheriff is wanted, opens his coat, and has an all-purpose selection of badges: "Chicken Inspector," "Junior G-Man," etc. He's ready to impersonate any given role at any given moment.

A: I like the way he pulls out his guns, and his chaps come off along with them. "Time out, whilst I adjust my accoutrements . . ."

Q: Daffy seems to be very consistent with those self-conscious asides for his, sent straight to the viewer off the screen. You've said that you didn't preview your cartoons, but one verbal bit in RABBIT FIRE [1951] *must* have been previewed. Elmer Fudd is stalking both Bugs and Daffy—this is the first fully developed cartoon that features all three of them together—and Bugs keeps engineering it so that Daffy is the one who gets blasted by Elmer. Daffy angrily takes Bugs by the collar and says, "You're despicable!" This line always brings down the house . . . and then, as if you *knew* it would get a terrific laugh, Daffy proceeds to soliloquize on Bugs' despicability, elaborating on the line.

A: No, I actually rewrote the line on the soundstage when Mel Blanc *said* "You're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THE SCARLET PUMPERNICKEL. Left: Daffy and Melissa Duck. Right: Curtizian swordplay as Melissa watches.

CHUCK JONES CONTINUED

despicable!" The way he said the line was *so* good and *so* strong that I immediately rewrote the line, and said "Look, I want you to play with this thing, draw it our as much as you can—You're despicable, and not only that, you're pickable, and not only that. . . ." And Mel just kept going.

Q: It does appear very spontaneous.

A: It *was* spontaneous . . . I just let Mel go, him run out of gas on the idea. We used that in one of the Westerns, too . . .

Q: Yeah, Daffy's great mouthings-on. There's a lot of rambling speech in the "Charlie Dog" cartoons as well.

A: They were both pretty noisy characters. Those "Charlie" cartoons were real talk-fests. I probably prepared myself for *not* talking, in the pantomime cartoons, by talking a lot in these. And I enjoyed it.

Q: From your very first cartoons, you made a great effort to find those plots and situations that are so basic that there's no need for dialogue—so often, you've opted for pantomime cartoons. Is it simply a matter of your preference for visual rather than verbal wit? There must be more to it, since when you use dialogue, you use it in a special or unique way.

A: I could understand a person's inability to express himself more than I could his ability to express himself. Like Daffy saying, "You're despicable! And not only that you're pickable, etc."; he was always reaching for it. Frustrating verbal expression seems to me to be more effective because, well, that's what I know best.

Q: Friz Freleng's characters, on the other hand, were always more vocal.

A: Yeah, there's a classic example, when he has Yosemite Sam telling Bugs to shut up . . .

Q: And Bugs answers back, "Sure I'll shut up, of course I'll shut up, I'll shut up any time anybody says so. I'm the kind of person who shuts up whenever I'm told to, I'm the best shutter-upper you ever saw, I'm . . ."

A: And then Sam screams, "Shut up shutting up!!" Anyway, it *is* a different way to approach the character, and I guess I never used dialogue to that extent.

Q: I'd say that you had a more self-contained Bugs . . .

A: Maybe. I'd suspect that Friz's Bugs would be more of a scamp, and Tex Avery's more a controlled lunatic, a brilliant controlled lunatic. Bob Clampett's was a thoroughly amoral lunatic, with flashes of greatness. All these characters—Bugs, Daffy, Pepe, Porky—in a way are like the multiplications of our own foibles. And if they weren't, of course, they wouldn't be valuable at all, they wouldn't be funny. But I suspect that all humor is based on that fact: the recognition in others, in a multiplied form, of something that we ourselves are capable of. It's like what Orwell said: "I've never met a person that was any worse than I am."

CARTOONOGRAPHIES

by Joe Adamson

CHUCK JONES

1938 NIGHT WATCHMAN; DOG GONE MODERN. **1939** ROBIN HOOD MAKES GOOD; PRESTO CHANGE-O; DAFFY DUCK AND THE DINOSAUR; NAUGHTY BUT MICE; OLD GLORY; SNOWMAN'S LAND; LITTLE BROTHER RAT; LITTLE LION HUNTER; THE GOOD EGG; SNIFFLES AND THE BOOKWORM; CURIOUS PUPPY. **1940** MIGHTY HUNTERS; ELMER'S CANDID CAMERA; SNIFFLES TAKES A TRIP; TOM THUMB IN TROUBLE; THE EGG COLLECTOR; GHOST WANTED; GOOD NIGHT ELMER; BEDTIME FOR SNIFFLES; ELMER'S PET RABBIT; SNIFFLES BELLS THE CAT.

1941 TOY TROUBLE; THE WACKY WORM; INKI AND THE LION; SNOW TIME FOR COMEDY; JOE GLOW THE FIREFLY; BRAVE LITTLE BAT; SADDLE SILLY; THE BIRD CAME C.O.D.; PORKY'S ANT; CONRAD THE SAILOR; PORKY'S PRIZE PONY; DOG TIRED; THE DRAFT HORSE; HOLD THE LION, PLEASE; PORKY'S MIDNIGHT MATINEE. **1942** THE SQUAWKIN' HAWK; FOX POP; MY FAVORITE DUCK; TO DUCK OR NOT TO DUCK; THE DOVER BOYS; CASE OF THE MISSING HARE; PORKY'S CAFE. **1943** FLOP GOES THE WEASEL; SUPER RABBIT; THE UNBEARABLE BEAR; THE ARISTO CAT; WACKIKI WABBIT; FIN 'N CATTY; INKI AND THE MYNAH BIRD. **1944** TOM TURK AND DAFFY; ANGEL PUSS; FROM HAND TO MOUSE; THE ODOR-ABLE KITTY; BUGS BUNNY AND THE THREE BEARS; THE WEAKLY REPORTER; LOST AND FOUNDLING. **1945** TRAP HAPPY PORKY; HARE CONDITIONED; HARE TONIC; HUSH MY MOUSE; FRESH AIREDALE; QUENTIN QUAIL; HAIR RAISING HARE; THE EAGER BEAVER. **1946** ROUGHLY SQUEAKING; SCENT-IMENTAL OVER YOU; FAIR AND WORM-ER; A FEATHER IN HIS HARE. **1947** LITTLE ORPHAN AIREDALE; WHAT'S BREWIN' BRUIN; HOUSE HUNTING MICE; HAREDEVIL HARE; INKI AT THE CIRCUS; A PEST IN THE HOUSE; RABBIT PUNCH. **1948** YOU WERE NEVER DUCKIER; MISSISSIPPI HARE; MOUSE WRECKERS; SCAREDY CAT; MY BUNNY LIES OVER THE SEA; AWFUL ORPHAN; THE BEE-DEVILED BRUIN; DAFFY DILLY; LONG-HAIRED HARE. **1949** FRIGID HARE; RABBIT HOOD; OFTEN AN ORPHAN; FAST AND FURRY-OUS; FOR SCENT-IMENTAL REASONS; BEAR FEAT; HOMELESS HARE. **1950** THE HYPO-CHONDRI-CAT; DOG GONE SOUTH; THE SCARLET PUMPERNICKEL; 8-BALL BUNNY; THE DUCKSTERS; RABBIT OF SEVILLE; CAVEMAN INKI.

1951 TWO'S A CROWD; A HOUND FOR TROUBLE; RABBIT FIRE; CHOW HOUND; THE WEARING OF THE GRIN; A BEAR FOR PUNISHMENT; BUNNY HUGGED; SCENT-IMENTAL ROMEO; CHEESE CHASERS; DRIP-ALONG DAFFY. **1952** OPERATION: RABBIT; WATER, WATER EVERY HARE; THE HASTY HARE; MOUSEWARMING; DON'T GIVE UP THE SHEEP; FEED THE KITTY; LITTLE BEAU PEPE; BEEP BEEP; GOING! GOING! GOSH!; TERRIER STRICKEN; RABBIT SEASONING; KISS ME CAT. **1953** FORWARD MARCH HARE; WILD OVER YOU; BULLY FOR BUGS; DUCK AMUCK; MUCH ADO ABOUT NUTTING; DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24½ CENTURY; ZIPPING ALONG; FELINE FRAME-UP. **1954** PUNCH TRUNK; FROM A TO ZZZZ; BEWITCHED BUNNY; DUCK! RABBIT! DUCK!; NO BARKING; STOP, LOOK, AND HASTEN!; SHEEP AHOY; MY LITTLE DUCKAROO. **1955** THE CAT'S BAH; CLAWS FOR ALARM; LUMBER JACK RABBIT (in 3-D); READY, SET, ZOOM!; RABBIT RAMPAGE; DOUBLE OR MUTTON; BABY BUGGY BUNNY; BEANSTALK BUNNY; PAST PERFORMANCE; JUMPIN' JUPITER; GUIDED MUSCLE; KNIGHT-MARE HARE. **1956** TWO SCENTS' WORTH; ONE FROGGY EVENING; BUGS' BONNETS; ROCKET SQUAD; HEAVEN SCENT; ROCKET-BYE BABY; BROOMSTICK BUNNY; GEE WHIZZZZ; BARBARY COAST BUNNY. **1957** DEDUCE, YOU SAY; THERE THEY GO-GO-GO!; SCRAMBLED ACHES; GO FLY A KIT; STEAL WOOL; ZOOM AND BORED; TO HARE IS HUMAN; ALI BABA BUNNY; BOYHOOD DAZE; WHAT'S OPERA, DOC?; TOUCHÉ AND GO. **1958** HARE-WAY TO THE STARS; HOOK, LINE, AND STINKER; ROBIN HOOD DAFFY; WHOA, BE GONE!; TO ITCH HIS OWN. **1959** BATON BUNNY; HOT ROD AND REEL; CAT FEUD; HIP HIP— HURRY!; REALLY SCENT. **1960** FASTEST WITH THE MOSTEST; WHO SCENT YOU?; RABBIT'S FEAT; WILD ABOUT HURRY; READY, WOOLEN AND ABLE.

1961 HIGH NOTE; HOPALONG CASUALTY; THE ABOMINABLE SNOW RABBIT; A SCENT OF THE MATTERHORN; LICKETY SPLAT; ZIP 'N SNORT; THE MOUSE ON 57TH STREET; COMPRESSED HARE. **1962** LOUVRE COME BACK TO ME; BEEP PREPARED; A SHEEP IN THE DEEP; NELLY'S FOLLY; ZOOM AT THE TOP. **1963** MARTIAN THRU GEORGIA; NOW HEAR THIS; HARE-BREADTH HURRY; I WAS A TEENAGE THUMB; WOOLEN UNDER WHERE. **1964** WAR AND PIECES; TRANSYLVANIA 6-5000; MAD AS A MARS HARE; TO BEEP OR NOT TO BEEP.

CHUCK JONES AT MGM

(all Tom and Jerry cartoons unless indicated by *)
1963 PENTHOUSE MOUSE. **1964** THE CAT ABOVE AND THE MOUSE BELOW; IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE MOUSE; MUCH ADO ABOUT MOUSING; SNOWBODY LOVES ME; UNSHRINKABLE JERRY MOUSE. **1965** THE DOT AND THE LINE *; AH SWEET MOUSE-STORY OF LIFE; TOM-IC ENERGY; BAD DAY AT CAT ROCK; BROTHERS CARRY MOUSE OFF; HAUNTED MOUSE; I'M JUST WILD ABOUT JERRY; OF FELINE BONDAGE; YEAR OF THE MOUSE; CAT'S ME-OUCH. 1966 DUEL PERSONALITY; JERRY JERRY QUITE CONTRARY; LOVE ME, LOVE MY MOUSE (with Ben Washam). 1967 THE BEAR THAT WASN'T*; CAT AND DUPLICAT.

CHUCK JONES FEATURE FILMS

1962 GAY PURR-EE (story). **1971** THE PHANTOM TOLL BOOTH.

CHUCK JONES TELEVISION SPECIALS

1970 HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS. **1971** HORTON HEARS A WHO; THE POGO SPECIAL BIRTHDAY SPECIAL. **1973** A CHRISTMAS CAROL (executive producer); THE CRICKET IN TIMES SQUARE; A VERY MERRY CRICKET. **1974** YANKEE DOODLE CRICKET. **1975** RIKI-TIKI-TAVY.

TEX AVERY

TEX AVERY AT WARNER BROTHERS

1936 GOLDDIGGERS OF '49; PORKY THE RAINMAKER; I'D LOVE TO TAKE ORDERS FROM YOU; PLANE DIPPY; I LOVE TO SINGA; MILK AND MONEY; MISS GLORY; THE VILLAGE SMITHY; PORKY THE WRESTLER; THE BLOW-OUT; DON'T LOOK NOW. **1937** PICADOR PORKY; PORKY'S DUCK HUNT; I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU; PORKY'S GARDEN; AIN'T WE GOT FUN; UNCLE TOM'S BUNGALOW; I WANNA BE A SAILOR; EGGHEAD RIDES AGAIN; SUNBONNET BLUE; LITTLE RED WALKING HOOD; DAFFY DUCK AND EGGHEAD; THE SNEEZING WEASEL. **1938** THE PENGUIN PARADE; THE ISLE OF PINGO-PONGO; CINDERELLA MEETS FELLA; JOHNNY SMITH AND POKER-HUNTAS; A FEUD THERE WAS; DAFFY DUCK IN HOLLYWOOD; THE MICE WILL PLAY; HAMATEUR NIGHT. **1939** DAY AT THE ZOO; THUGS WITH DIRTY MUGS; FRESH FISH; BELIEVE IT OR ELSE; LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT FUN; DANGEROUS DAN MCFOO; DETOURING AMERICA; SCREWBALL FOOTBALL; THE EARLY WORM GETS THE BIRD. **1940** CROSS COUNTRY DETOURS; THE BEAR'S TALE; A GANDER AT MOTHER GOOSE; A WILD HARE; CIRCUS TODAY; CEILING HERO; HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS; WACKY WILD LIFE; OF FOX AND HOUNDS. **1941** TORTOISE BEATS HARE; HOLLYWOOD STEPS OUT; PORKY'S PREVIEW; CRACKPOT QUAIL; THE HECKLING HARE; AVIATION VACATION; HAUNTED MOUSE; ALL THIS AND RABBIT STEW; THE BUG PARADE; THE CAGEY CANARY. **1942** ALOHA HOOEY; CRAZY CRUISE.

TEX AVERY AT PARAMOUNT

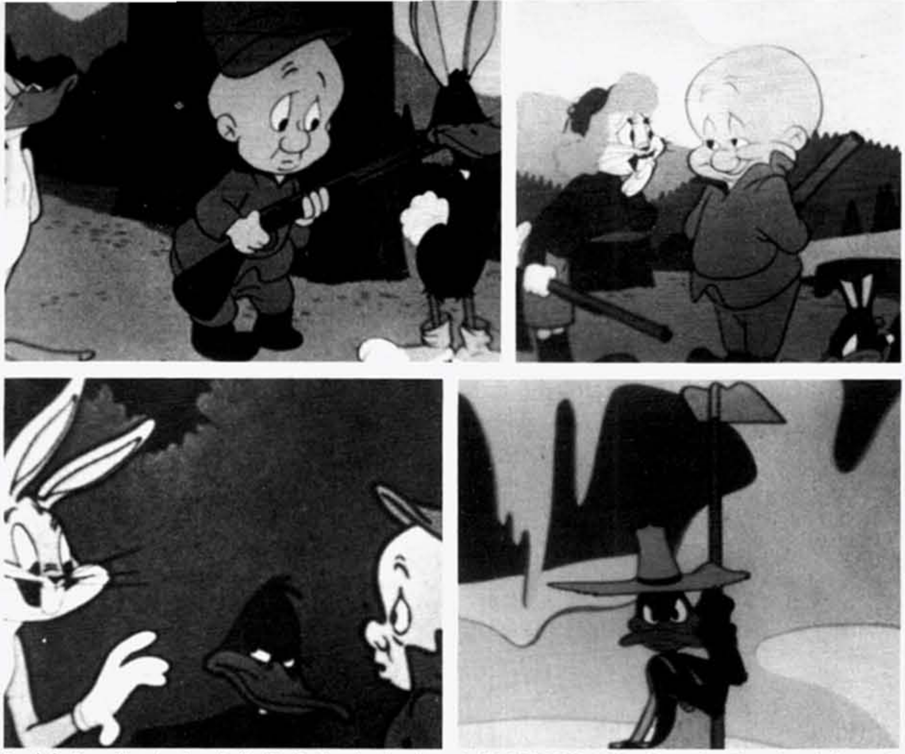
1942 SPEAKING OF ANIMALS DOWN ON THE FARM; SPEAKING OF ANIMALS IN A PET SHOP; SPEAKING OF ANIMALS IN THE ZOO.

TEX AVERY AT MGM

1942 THE EARLY BIRD DOOD IT; THE BLITZ WOLF. **1943** RED HOT RIDING HOOD; DUMB-HOUNDED; WHO KILLED WHO?; ONE HAM'S FAMILY; WHAT'S BUZZIN' BUZZARD. **1944** BATTY BASEBALL; SCREWBALL SQUIRREL; HAPPY-GO-NUTTY; BIG HEEL-WATHA. **1945** THE SCREWY TRUANT; THE SHOOTING OF DAN MCGOO; JERKY TURKEY; SWING SHIFT CINDERELLA; WILD AND WOOLFY. **1946** LONESOME LENNY; THE HICK CHICK; NORTHWEST HOUNDED POLICE; HENPECKED HOBOES. **1947** RED HOT RANGERS; HOUND HUNTERS; UNCLE TOM'S CABANA; SLAP-HAPPY LION; KING-SIZE CANARY. **1948** WHAT PRICE FLEADOM; LITTLE TINKER; THE HALF PINT PYGMY; THE CAT THAT HATED PEOPLE; LUCKY DUCKY. **1949** BAD LUCK BLACKIE; SENOR DROOPY; OUTFOXED; DOGGONE TIRED; LITTLE RURAL RIDING HOOD; WAGS TO RICHES; COUNTERFEIT CAT; THE HOUSE OF TOMORROW. **1950** THE CUCKOO CLOCK; VENTRILOQUIST CAT; GARDEN GOPHER; THE CHUMP CHAMP; THE PEACHY COBBLER. **1951** COCK-A-DOODLE DOG; DARE-DEVIL DROOPY; DROOPY'S GOOD DEED; SYMPHONY IN SLANG; DROOPY'S DOUBLE TROUBLE; THE CAR OF TOMORROW. **1952** THE MAGICAL MAESTRO; ONE CAB'S FAMILY; ROCK-A-BYE BEAR. **1953** LITTLE JOHNNY JET; THE THREE LITTLE PUPS; TV OF TOMORROW. **1954** DRAG-A-LONG DROOPY; BILLY BOY; HOMESTEADER DROOPY; FARM OF TOMORROW; THE FLEA CIRCUS; DIXIELAND DROOPY. **1955** FIELD AND SCREAM; THE FIRST BAD MAN; DEPUTY DROOPY; CELLBOUND. **1956** MILLIONAIRE DROOPY. **1957** CAT'S MEOW.

TEX AVERY AT UNIVERSAL (WALTER LANTZ)

1955 I'M COLD; THE LEGEND OF ROCKABYE POINT; CRAZY MIXED-UP PUP; SH-H-H-H.



Top left: Bugs disguised as Daffy, Daffy disguised as Bugs, in RABBIT FIRE (1951). Top right: Elmer bowled over by Bugs' charmingly inept huntress (RABBIT FIRE). Bottom left: "Aha! Pronoun trouble!" in RABBIT SEASONING (1952). Bottom right: Daffy dressed as a farmer against a snowscape in DUCK AMUCK (1953).

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DUCK AMUCK

by Richard Thompson

Chuck Jones and Daffy Duck go way back. Jones began working with Daffy around 1939, with DAFFY AND THE DINOSAUR, and consistently from 1942 on. The team separated after ROBIN HOOD DAFFY in 1958; Jones continued with Bugs Bunny films, "Roadrunner" cartoons, the "Wolf and Sheepdog" series, and many of his one-shots after that, until the Warner Brothers cartoon shop shut down in 1962. Their best work together spans the 1948-1958 period.

The importance of other Warners animators shouldn't be underestimated, but it's clear that Jones made the best of the films with Daffy. In contrast to Friz Freleng, who represents the zenith if not the acme of the classical tradition, Jones takes the characters and the formal aspects of his cartoons far beyond standard limits. He developed an eloquent naturalistic depiction of facial expression—as opposed to Tex Avery's expressionist or surreal approaches. As indicated in the interview earlier in these pages, Jones has also pursued an interest in accurately adapting animal movements, anatomy, and behavior. The "disciplines" he talks about are narrative and structural elements which stress form, repetition, limits, and *les regles du jeu.* His tendency toward the black and the bleak outstrips even Avery's, probably because it is presented through simple, step-by-step logic.

Jones is outstanding with his actors. He uses the best, never stuck with Foghorn Leghorn (a weak ham) or Tweety-Pie (who trades on her cuteness as Shirley Temple did). Yosemite Sam is Freleng property, rightly: Sam's style, always at top register, is incompatible with Jones's method. The test is working with Porky, Bugs, Daffy, and Sylvester; and here Jones has no peer, whatever criteria for acting are applied.

Jones's verbal range also separates him from his colleagues. I won't try to fix responsibility among Jones, his writers Michael Maltese and Tedd Pierce, and all the other members of his unit and the Warners animation ward who contributed material to the cartoons. Whoever did it, the dialogue in Jones's films is invariably complex, multi-leveled, and literate. Bugs, Daffy, et al. are more fully characterized by Jones's dialogue than by any other unit's, although the lines are sometimes so deeply welded to the individual character's performance that they pale on paper, as the DUCK AMUCK continuity reproduced here shows.

In RABBIT HOOD (1949), a Jones character says, "Odds fish! The very air abounds in kings!" In RABBIT FIRE (1951), while setting out spurious "Rabbit Season" signs, Daffy explains, "Survival of the fittest, and besides, it's fun! Woo-woo! Woo-woo!" In RABBIT SEASONING (1952), he locates the cause of his problem: "Aha! Pronoun trouble!" Elmer says to Bugs, returned as an angel in DUCK! RABBIT! DUCK! (1954), "Golly, Mr. Wabbit, I hope I didn't hurt you too much when I killed you." Or take Daffy's final speech to Elmer in the same film: "Shoot me again, I enjoy it! I love the smell of burnt feathers and gunpowder and cordite! I'm an elk, shoot me, go on, it's elk season! I'm a fiddler crab, why don't you shoot me, it's fiddler crab season. What have I done? Where did I take the wrong turning?" This is spiced with Daffy's excellent miming of an elk and a fiddler crab through tangled arrangements of angular black limbs and digits.

Jones is also more interested in the use of written words, in letters and signs, than most animators: sometimes for labels, sometimes for real-movie iconographic references, sometimes in the unemphasized manner of modern filmmakers. In ONE FROGGY EVENING (1957), the construction worker leaves the worksite with the frog in the box, tiptoeing past a background wall with a "DANGER" sign on it.

Jones experimented with his idea of disciplines most starkly in the "Roadrunner" series. Sometimes he organized a cartoon around extrinsic material: in WHAT'S OPERA, DOC? (1957) the internal disciplines of the Bugs and Elmer characters are played off against references outside to FANTASIA and Beyreuth-style Wagner. More often, he chose to create extremely simplified situations with few elements. These discipline-situations served as armatures for the characters, intensifying their impact on us.

In the "Roadrunner" series this is modified as the wordless characters and the emphasis on repetition create an emotional distance, and finally a sense of serenity: a series of four or five shots emphasizing the graceful arc of the Coyote against a lovely sky being drawn along by his jet harpoon or whatever, calling attention to the curve rather than the disaster; or the contemplative moments provided as he diminishes from our view toward the canyon floor. This intensification can be deflected, as in

ALI BABA BUNNY (1957), when Daffy's retribution is miniaturization; or it can be overshadowed by the sheer spectacle in BEANSTALK BUNNY (1955). But in Jones's hunter trilogy—RABBIT FIRE, RABBIT SEASONING, and DUCK! RABBIT! DUCK!—Bugs, Daffy, and Elmer are locked into unavoidable three-way combat, and the stakes are much higher for the characters: beyond dignity to sanity and survival.

Jones shares the responsibility for maturing Daffy from an eccentric one-dimensional zany in the Thirties to a full and responsive instrument in the Sixties: elongating and angularizing the form, making it less ducklike, and overseeing Mel Blanc's development of a rounded vocal personality. In the Fifties, Jones took Daffy on an odyssey through the genres, as far as the NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK "reality joke" of THE SCARLET PUMPERNICKEL (1948). Aside from exploring Daffy's range thoroughly, the main effect of these films was to establish a new role for Porky: second banana and caustic interlocutor.

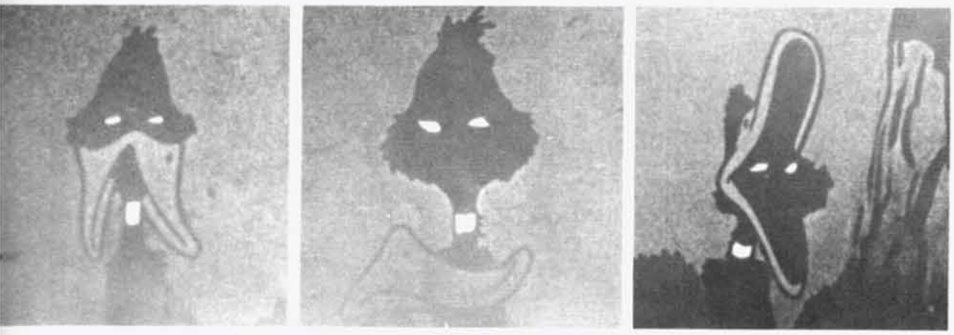
Jones then brought Warners' two superstars into direct confrontation: Bugs and Daffy. It's as if he created the opportunity to explore each character in terms of the other, and to refine the differences. With a sense of roots, Jones returns to Avery's WILD HARE and subsequent films, in which Elmer the hunter first glimpsed the rough beginnings of Bugs and, ricocheting through, Woo-woo!, a duck who's main line was "I'm just daffy!" Elmer is the hunter amid the woods and mountains of hunting season. The continuing gag is Bugs trying to convince Elmer it's duck season, and vice-versa with Daffy. The films in the trilogy share the same points: how dumb can Elmer be (pwetty dumb); how clever can Bugs be; how much can Daffy suffer.

For our purposes, the issue is: how do Bugs and Daffy differ? Bugs is a winner and Daffy is a loser. Greg Ford has pointed out that in these three films we have the clearest definition of general roles: Elmer never knows what's going on; Bugs always knows what's going on and is in control of events; Daffy's bright enough to figure out what's up and understand how to be in control, but he never makes it. Both Bugs and Daffy are con men and talkers, but Daffy talks too much. Both are vain, but Bugs's vanity is indiscreet, leading him into situations he must, and can, resolve; Daffy's vanity is disastrous. Bugs stands back from a situation, analyzes it, and makes his move; Daffy becomes emotionally involved, loses his distance, and blows it. He's stuck with a one-track mind which fixes on one facet of the problem and loses sight of the larger pattern.

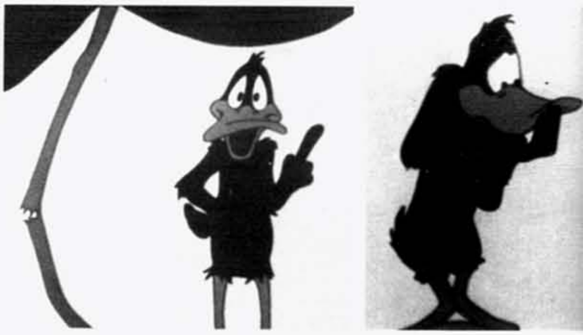
This sort of difference is clear in their behavior in period pieces. When thrust into another time period, Bugs rarely appears as anything but present-day Bugs among costumed rustics; Daffy wears the appropriate costumes and attempts to speak and play the role *à la* Robin Hood or Buck Rogers. Daffy longs to be a movie hero. Bugs looks suave in his pearl gray outfit trimmed in white; Daffy's all black, less sleekly contoured, ring-necked (oh, the indignity!) —his main feature is the canti-levered orange-yellow beak that indicates the center of his character. He looks different from all the other characters. Even his place in the *découpage* is different: Bugs's reaction-shots present a wide range of emotions, responses, comments; cutaways to Daffy have only two functions, either to show him recognizing his impending doom, or to document the damage done.

At the end of the last who-shoots-who argument in RABBIT SEASONING, Bugs narrows Daffy's choices down to whether Elmer will shoot him here or wait till he gets home. "Oh, no you don't," says Daffy, "he'll wait till he gets home." He and Elmer go off arm-in-arm into Elmer's cabin. Explosion. Blasted Daffy returns to tell Bugs, "You're despicable."

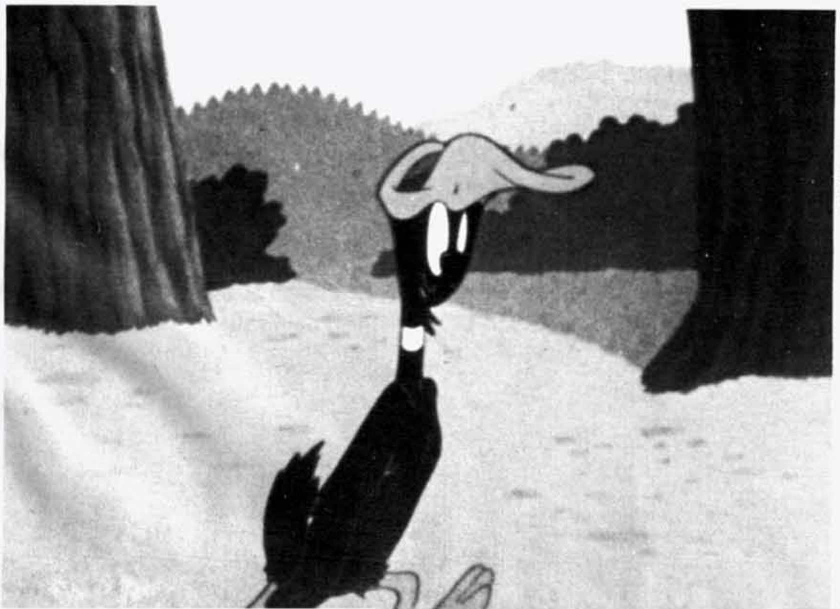
In DUCK! RABBIT! DUCK! Daffy goes crazy (the elk-and-fiddler-crab dialogue). Elmer, confused by all the signs for Skunk, Pigeon, and/or Mongoose season, pleads with a game warden (Bugs in disguise) to know what season it is. Baseball season, Bugs replies, and Elmer goes nuts too, bounding off after a ball Bugs has thrown. Daffy has a remission and the ensuing dialogue occurs:



Above and below: Daffy, debeaked or not debeaked



DUCK AMUCK.



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D: Got rid of him, eh?

B: Yup. Dat takes care of him. Eh, now tell me: just between the two of us, what season is it really?

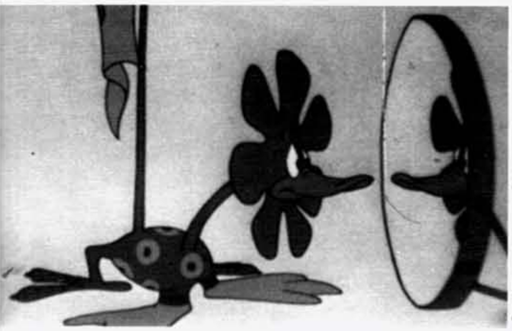
D: Eh-heh-heh, don't be so naive, Buster. Why, everybody knows it's really duck season.

Walking away, Daffy is suddenly surrounded by hunters who blast him into a graphic black smudge on the snow. Barely alive, he croaks: "Gasp . . . gasp . . . you're despicable."

Daffy's beak is used indexically in these films, anticipating such a use of his entire body in DUCK AMUCK (1953). Each time he suffers a shooting, his beak is rearranged on his head—or parted from it—in some wrong fashion: upside-down and mounted over his eyes, so that he thinks everything is upside-down; in Kwakiutl thunderbird mask arrangement, so that his entire face is inside the open jaws; spinning around his head like a shooting gallery target; or simply crumpled like tinfoil after sticking his head out a hole to see if Elmer's still there: "Still lurking about," he says.

Another physical method of placing Bugs and Daffy in these films is their entry into shots. Bugs is usually discovered by a cut, immobile in the center of the frame or rising into it from his hole. Daffy is found either by walking into a fixed shot, or by cutting from a static shot of Bugs and Elmer to a moving-camera shot, tracking with Daffy as he moves toward them ultimately into the framelines of the first shot as he joins Bugs and Elmer. All of which indicates to the viewer that Bugs is at the center of these events, the hub, nearly (but not quite—yet) the *meneur du jeu;* and as corollary, that Daffy's constant movement, sometimes eccentric, is an attempt to find a similar spot at the eye of the storm.

In the first stage of each cartoon, Bugs and Daffy are actually under Elmer's gun muzzle as they attempt to get each other shot. Bugs always wins by playing on Daffy's impatience and perversity. "Duck season," Bugs says, and swings the gun toward Daffy. The duck says, "Rabbit season," and swings the gun back to Bugs. This repeats, speeding up, until somewhere in the middle Bugs says, "Rabbit season," and feints with the gun, leaving it pointed at himself. "Duck season!" Daffy yells triumphantly, swings the gun over, and commands "Fire!"



"Hey!! Not me, you slop artist!"

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The action then escalates into second-stage, more involved con duels. RABBIT FIRE:

Bugs is a strong, more traditional American hero who reacts to threats upon his person or property with appropriate violence. Daffy is much more complicated. He's a coward, he claims, but a live coward. Daffy feels a preemptive necessity to set someone else (Bugs) up for the destruction he knows is stalking any film he's in. He initiates deceit. His yen for heroism, as well as his tenacity and ruthlessness in its quest (or the quest of its appearance) are balanced by his capacity for self-pity, self-righteousness, and self-aggrandizement. There's a lot of schlemiel in the mix, and a lot of proto-Jack Lemmon.

Elmer is in the cartoons as the source of danger and as a dupe. He's dangerous because he's a hunter with a gun, and consequently quite certain he's there to shoot something: also because he's dumb and unstable. To Elmer, reality is whatever he's just been conned into thinking it is.

The principal differences among RABBIT FIRE, RABBIT SEASONING, and DUCK! RABBIT! DUCK! are their endings. Signs on trees claiming "Duck Season" or "Rabbit Season" are major props in all three films, though we usually don't know whether they're true or not, or who puts them up. At the end of RABBIT FIRE, Bugs and Daffy are pulling such signs off a tree, and under each sign is the opposite sign, back and forth until the last sign is revealed: "Elmer Season." Elmer does an aside "Uh-oh" take, and we cut to Bugs and Daffy in unison and hunting costume as Bugs says, "Be vewwy vewwy quiet: we're hunting Ewmers," and Daffy says, "Huh-huh-huh-huh."

B *(reading from "1,000 Ways To Cook A Duck"):* Duck polonaise under glass. Um-mmm.

D *(reading from "1,000 Ways To Cook A Rabbit"):* Rabbit au gratin de gelatin under tooled leather. Duh-rool, duh-rool.

B Barbecued duck meat with broiled duck bill milanaise, Yumeeyum.

D: Chicken-fried rabbit with cottontail sauce braised in carrots. Mmm-mmmmm.

E: I'm sowwy, fewwows, but I'm a vegetawian, I just hunt for the sport of it. Huh-huh-huh-huh-huh.

B *(accusingly):* Oh, yeah! Well, there's other sports besides huntin', you know.

D *(emulating Bogart's Broadway jive entrance, in whites with raquet):* Anyone for tennis? (BLAM!) Nice game.

The process is more involved in DUCK! RABBIT! DUCK! when Elmer identifies Bugs as a stewing rabbit and invites him to say his prayers.

B: Look, doc. Are you looking for trouble? I'm not a stewin' rabbit. I'm a fricasseein' rabbit. *(Shows label on ankle: "Fricasseeing rabbit.")*

E: Fwicasseein' wabbit?

B: Have you got a fwicasseein' wabbit license?

E: Well, no, I . . .

B: Do you happen to know what the penalty is for shooting a fwicasseein' wabbit without a fwicasseein' wabbit license?

D *(outraged):* Just a parboiled minute! What is this, a cooking class? Shoot 'im, shoot 'im!

E: But I haven't got a license to shoot a fwicasseein' wabbit.

D *(exiting):* Don't go away, Daniel Boone, I'll be back in a flash . . . "This license permits the bearer to shoot a fwicasee," uh . . . fwickass, uh . . . Say, Bud, how do you spell fwickaseein'?

B: "F-R-I-C-A-S-S-E-E-I-N-G . . . D-U-C-K."

D: Here y'are, Leatherstocking, all nice and legal . . . Hurry up, hurry up, the fine print doesn't mean a thing . . . Hurry up, hurry up!

BLAM! Daffy is blasted by Elmer.

D: Here, let me see that thing. "Fricasseeing Duck." Well, I guess I'm the goat. *(Surprised:)* What?

(Bugs raises a "Goat Season Open" sign. BLAM on Daffy.)

D *(to Bugs):* You're a dirty dog.

B *(to Daffy):* And you're a dirty skunk.

D I'm a dirty skunk? I'm a dirty skunk?

(Bugs raises a "Skunk Season" sign. BLAM on Daffy.)

D *(disgusted with self):* Brother, am I a pigeon.

(Bugs raises a "Pigeon Season" sign. . . .)

The final stage of these narratives involves variations on role and identity through imitation and disguise. Bugs and Daffy try to further confuse Elmer by dressing up as each other. These broadly comic episodes are surprising and funny because of our knowledge of each character and our interest in how each chooses to ape the other, rather like Walter Brennan doing John Wayne at the end of RIO BRAVO. Jones provides feather dusters, swim fins, and a shower cap for Bugs' dumber and noisier version of Daffy. Daffy's version emphasizes slick belligerence. The *coup de grace* is Mel Blanc's creation of the voices of Daffy imitating Bugs, etc. Finally, we see Bugs's drag act, for which Elmer is always a sucker. Bugs as charmingly inept lady huntress invariably bowls Elmer over, often to Daffy's disgust. Sometimes Daffy joins in by playing Bugs's hunting dog, doing an excellent impression of the Frisky Dog character Jones used earlier in TERRIER STRICKEN (1952), etc.

DUCK AMUCK is Daffy's *Book of Job.* It is one of a handful of American animation masterpieces, and likely the most cerebral of them. Daffy makes the most of his opportunity for a definitive solo tour-de-force. It is at once a laff riot and an essay by demonstration on the nature and conditions of the animated film and the mechanics of film in general. (Even a quick check of film grammar is tossed in, via the "Gimme a closeup" gag.)

The basic concept in DUCK AMUCK is the idea of the frame and frame lines. The strategy within those lines develops through frustrating incongruities. The comic pay-off is the reflection of these themes in Daffy's character, his responses and—within the world of the cartoon—his literally cosmic humiliation. The film is extremely conscious of itself as an act of cinema, as is much of Jones's work.

The swashbuckler credits set the scene for another adventure epic like THE SCARLET PUMPERNICKEL. With extreme economy, Jones plays out the first sequence in an unbroken right-to-left (the hard way) tracking shot. That the entire world of the cartoon is *not* inside the frame

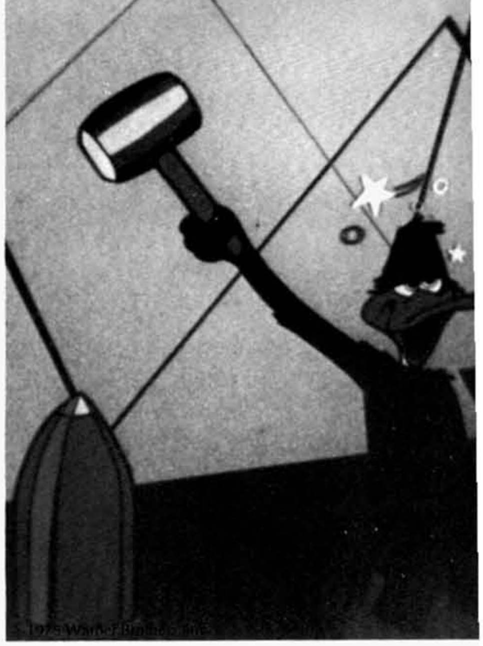
DUCK AMUCK CONTINUED

lines—that the director, as in live-action cinema, uses the frame to selectively show what he chooses to show—is emphasized as Daffy exits and enters past the frame lines as he makes costume changes in a futile effort to match the changing scene backgrounds, recalling a sequence from SHERLOCK, JR. Along with the frame-line idea, Daffy must be understood as an autonomous character, a put-upon actor capable both of playing roles and speaking for himself. This increases the vulnerability we witness through Daffy's forced metamorphoses.

The movement through the first section from a florid, busily high-style background, past pencil sketchlines of same, to plain white background couples with Daffy's complaints, the new brushed-in backgrounds, and Daffy's continuing frustration. The result: the integrity of the expected layout has been destroyed. Jones goes on to demonstrate that while the spirit and personality of Daffy, as abstractions, are unassailable, his physical person is up for grabs. Daffy is erased, re-drawn, and saddled with inappropriate sound effects. His objections are replaced by various bird sounds. He is absurdly painted, then turned into a parody of the duckbilled Flub-a-Dub and provided with a mirror so that, like the Coyote perceiving the chasm, he can understand what's wrong. DUCK AMUCK is a good illustration of Noel Burch's dialectic idea of film elements: foreground and background, space and action, character and environment, image and soundtrack are all in conflict with one another.

The precise attack on the logic and conventions of the form climaxes as the blackness outside the frame lines sags in on Daffy, taking over the screen. After failed attempts to prop this stuff up with struts, Daffy goes into a rage and shreds the invading black areas, asking that we "get this picture started," only to be cut off by an iris-in to black superimposed with "The End."

Obviously, Daffy is more sympathetic in this film than in the hunter trilogy because he is not preying on anyone else; he is a victim instead, no longer of himself but of some irrational power. Unable to cooperate with this force, Daffy takes responsibility for the picture upon himself, motivated both by the egotism of his starhood and a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DUCK AMUCK

DUCK AMUCK:

Dialogue and stage directions

All dialogue spoken by Daffy Duck except as noted.

Florid eighteenth-century swash fanfares.

Stand back, musketeers! They shall sample my blade! Touché! Unh! Unh! Unh! Unh!

Pan with Daffy swordplaying in period costume, past period castle background, past progressively less detailed sketchlines of the background, to a completely blank space.

Musketeers?... Hmmmm?... En Garde ...? My blade ...? Hey, psst, whoever's in charge here? The scenery? Where's the scenery?

Brush enters frame, paints in farmyard.

Stand back, musketeers. They shall sample my ...? Blade ...? Hmmmm? Okay, have it your way.

Daffy leaves frame-left, returns with appropriate overalls, hoe, and farmer's hat.

(Sings:) Daffy Duck he had a farm, ee aye ee aye o . . .

Background changes, while panning with Daffy, to Eskimo snowscape.

. . . And on this farm he had an igloo, ee . . . aye . . . eee . . . aye . . . ooh (*revelation*). Would it be too much to ask if we could make up our minds, hmmm?

Leaves frame, comes back on skis, wearing muffs and winter outfit.

(Sings:) Dashing through the snow, ya-ha-ha-ha-ha, through the fields we go, laughing all the way . . . eee . . . eee.

Background has changed to flowery Hawaiian jungle; Daffy exits, re-enters frame with lei, ukelele, and wraparound.

Sings: Farewell to thee, farewell to thee, the wind will carry back our sad refrai-hai-hai-hai-hai-hain. One last embrace, before we . . . mmmmm . . . hmmmmm.

On pan with Daffy, background has been downgraded again to sketchiness, and then to white.

Buster, it may come as a complete surprise to you to find that this is an animated cartoon, and that in animated cartoons they have scenery; and in all the years I . . .

Daffy is erased.

All right, wise guy, where am I!

Re-drawn as singing cowboy, Daffy moves to strum guitar. No audio. He raises a sign, SOUND PLEASE. He strums again. Guitar emits machine-gun sound. One more strum. Guitar honks Klaxon sound. He throws down guitar in anger and outrage. It crashes, shatters to "Hee-Haw!" sound. Daffy tries to protest: a rooster crow comes from his mouth. Another attempt: tropical bird calls. Slaps hand over mouth. Tentatively removes it: "Squeak!" Daffy flips out, voicebox back.

Raarrghbrbrbrbrbr!! And I've never been so humiliated in all my life! Look, Mac, just what's going on here? Let's get organized, hmmm? How about some scenery?

Pencil facetiously scrawls in childlike outline rendering of a city street.

That's dandy, ho ho, that's rich I'll say. Now how about some color, stupid?

Brush paints Daffy with crude colored polka-dots, stripes.

Hey!! Not me, you slop artist!

Erased, save for eyes and beak.

Well, where's the rest of me?

Daffy returned as crazy-looking purple mutant with petal-mane and tail that waves a flag spelling "screw-ball," picture-rebus fashion.

It's not as though I haven't lived up to my contract, goodness knows; and goodness knows it isn't as though I haven't kept myself trim, goodness knows, I've done that. That's strange, all of a sudden I don't quite feel myself. Oh, I feel alright, and yet I, I uh . . .

Mirror inked in. Daffy sees his reflection.

Hey!! You know better than that!!

Erased, redrawn back to normal.

Well?

Sailor suit provided.

Hmm, sea picture, eh? I always wanted to do a sea epic. Now Mr. Rembrandt, if you'll kindly oblige with a little appropriate scenery—*(Sings:)* Over the sea, let's go men, we're shovin' right off, we're shovin' right off—

Ocean daubed in, leaving Daffy stranded mid-air over water.

Again? *Splash.*

Daffy climbs ashore onto faraway island on horizon.

Distant voice: Hey! C'mere!, c'mere! Gimme a close-up!

Close-up granted, as whole screen reduces to size of postage-stamp to accommodate tiny distant face in corner of frame.

This is a close-up? A close-up, you jerk, a close-up!

Violent zoom-in for a "real" close-up. Overly close. Daffy's two enraged red eyes fill screen. Daffy turns, walks from camera in disgust.

Thanks for the sour persimmons, cousin. Now look, buster, let's have an understanding.

Thumping sounds as top and side framelines begin to sag and collapse in.

Now what? Brother, what a way to run a railroad. Hunh-urgh! Hunh-urgh! Huhn-urgh!

commitment to deliver the entertainment the audience deserves. Appropriately at this moment, his softshoe is disrupted as the image rolls out of frame, the frame line splitting the horizontal of the screen and providing two images of Daffy. This event dictates that Daffy have a fight with himself.

Then there is a turn for the better as Daffy is provided the lead in an aviation epic. Daffy handles an off-screen crash with good spirits—"Uh-oh! Time to hit the old silk!"—and seems to have resumed control until his chute is turned into an anvil. The film pivots on this event. Daffy loses his heroic posture, his last shot at control of the film, his physical well-being, and his grip on reality. He winds up reciting "The Village Smithy" while hammering on a sixteen-inch naval shell's detonator. It explodes. This particular image is emblematic of his entire career. It recalls FOREWARD MARCH HARE (1952), one of Jones's Bugs Bunny service comedies, which ends with Bugs testing shells. If they don't detonate—and none of them do—he stamps "DUD" on them as his Defense job. The difference is clear.

Daffy's last indignant attempt at self-assertion begins the final shot of the film. He literally pulls himself together and says, ". . . who is responsible for this? I demand that you show yourself. Who are you? Huh?" During the speech, the omnipotent pencil has lubitsched in a doorframe and a door; and, as Daffy finishes, the eraser end of the pencil nudges the door closed, settling his hash as finally as Bruce Baldwin's in HIS GIRL FRIDAY. As the shot continues, the frame limits are profoundly violated. The camera tracks back until we see the animation board, and then the animator—a gloating Bugs—eight-and-a-half seconds later.

Two years afterward, in RABBIT RAMPAGE (1955), Jones remade this film with Bugs as the victim and Elmeras the cartoonist misusing his powers. It isn't so successful. Daffy's the perfect paranoiac (and he has his reasons); Bugs is a winner, and doesn't quite fit the scenario. And Elmer as the all-powerful creator?? In Bugs's version, a major issue is Bugs's contract and whether he'll live up to it. The play with space and medium is more limited, and less pointed. It's the difference between bizarre sitcom and go-for-the-jugular *comedie noire.* The Daffy version, it seems to me, takes us much further inside ourselves: it's incandescent. The Bugs version is cooler. DUCK AMUCK can be seen as DAFFY'S BAD TRIP. Delusions, his own self-destructive fantasies, with the rapid, unpredictable, disconcerting changes of scene and orientation: it's the final extension of downhill ego-on-the-line dreams. Is it reassuring when we see, at the end of DUCK AMUCK, the concentric, esophagal Warner Brothers cartoon logo?

Perhaps this description of DUCK AMUCK will provoke more thoughtful criticism of Hollywood animation.

Chuck Jones said: "But what I want to say is that Daffy can live and struggle on an empty screen, without setting and without sound, just as well as with a lot of arbitrary props. *He remains Daffy Duck.*"

Although short of tits-and-ass, its distillation of paranoia, suffering, and irrationality make DUCK AMUCK the perfect short to show with Bob Fosse's LENNY. ⁂

Daffy now utters incredible shriek as he hysterically claws and tears at surrounding blackness.

Alright, let's get this picture started.

Penultimate fanfare, iris-out, THE END sign inserted. Daffy desperately pushes sign away.

No! No! Listen, pal, let's discuss this thing sanely, huh? Look, I'll tell you what, you go your way and I'll go mine. Live and let live. Right? Right. Ladies and gentlemen, there will be no further delays, so I shall attempt to entertain you in my own inimitabububle fashion.

Daffy starts softshoeing to "Way Down Upon the Swanee River." Film catches in projector gate, so that frameline splits screen in two horizontally. There are now an upper and a lower Daffy.

D#1: Now what? (*Looks below.*) What are you doin' down there?

D#2: Down here? What are you doin' up there?

Peeved, the second Daffy steps up to first Daffy to settle dispute.

D#1: Listen, bud, if you wasn't me, I'd smack you right in the puss.

D#2: Don't let that bother you, Jack.

D#1: Okay, you asked for it.

First Daffy takes a swing at the second. Second Daffy is erased leaving first twirling around mid-punch. All resolved as Daffy next is outfitted as WWI flying ace, in plane against blue sky. He digs it.

Oh brother, I'm a buzzboy!

Plane engine revs, goes into power dive, crashes into painted-in mountain. Daffy pilots body-less cockpit.

Uh-oh, time to hit the old silk. Geronimo!

Bails out successfully, until chute is repainted as an anvil. Daffy falls abruptly, crashes below. Cut to dazed and battered Daffy after fall, mindlessly hammering the anvil.

(Broken voice:) Under the spreading chestnut tree, the village smithy stands; the smith, a mighty man is he, with strong and sinewy . . .

Anvil repainted as bomb. Daffy continues to bring down hammer. Explosion.

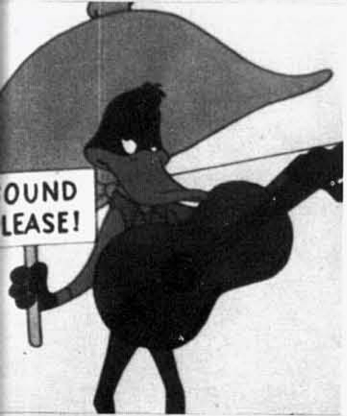
(Nearly destroyed voice:) . . . hands. (*Pause.*) Awright, enough is enough, this is the final, this is the very very last straw; who is responsible for this? I demand that you show yourself.

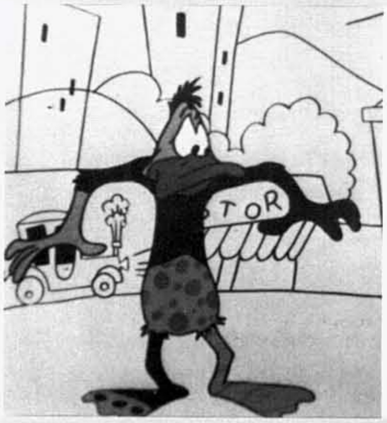
The unseen artist draws in door and door-frame.

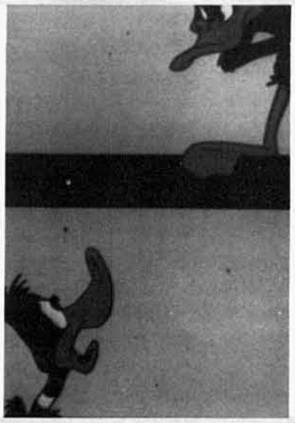
Who are you?! Huh?!

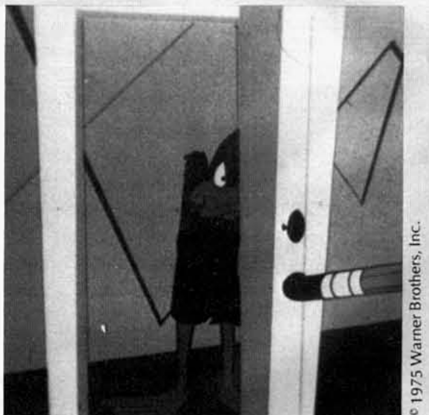
Door is shut in Daffy's face. Bugs Bunny revealed at the animation board.

Bugs Bunny: Ain't I a stinker? ⁂









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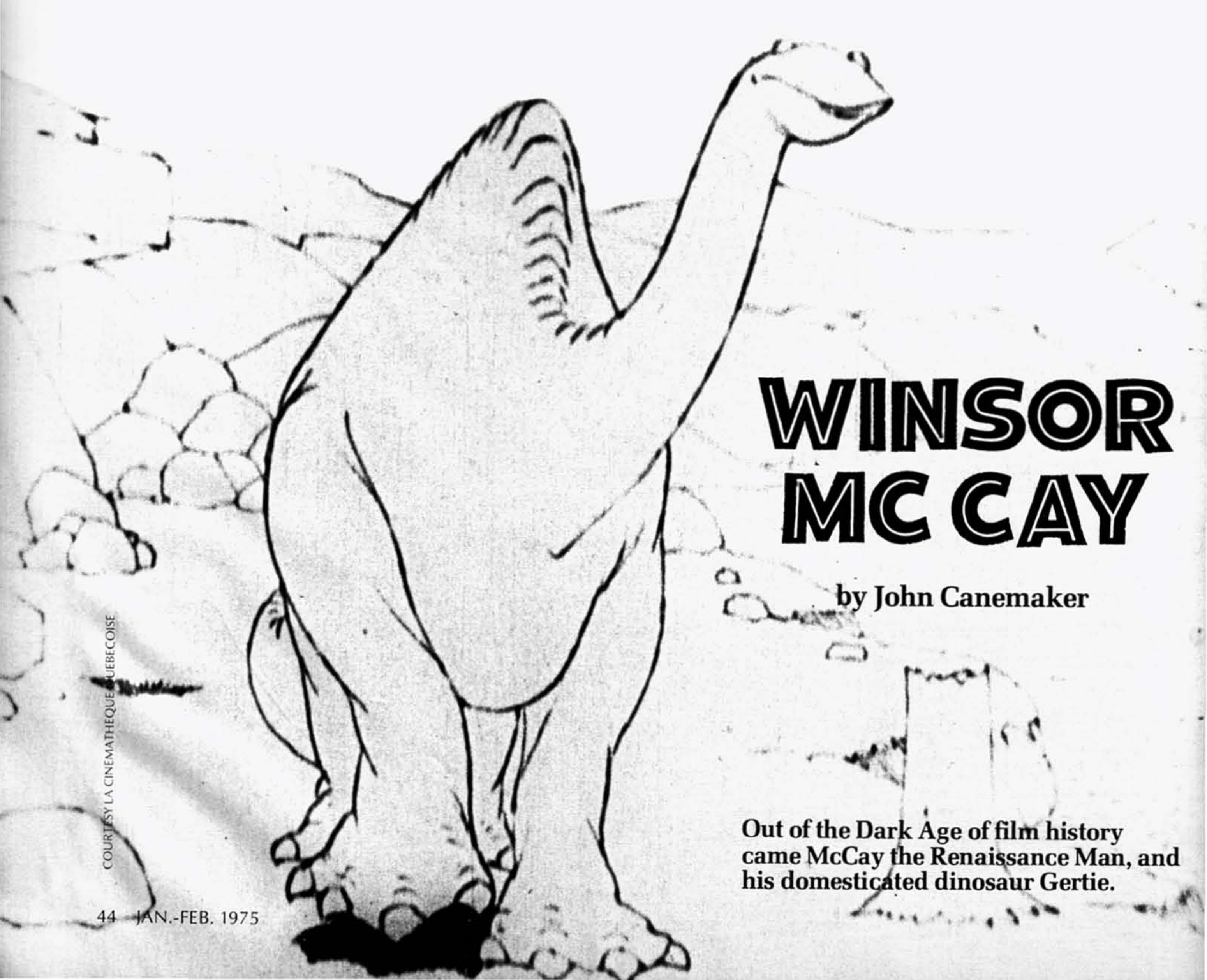
WINSOR MC CAY

by John Canemaker

Out of the Dark Age of film history came McCay the Renaissance Man, and his domesticated dinosaur Gertie.



COURTESY LA CINEMATHEQUE QUEBECOISE

For making the following research into the history and techniques of each of the Winsor McCay animated films such an exciting and pleasurable task, the author is grateful to Louise Beaudet, Directrice of La Cinémathèque Quebecoise, who arranged for him to view the films last summer in Montreal, and whose knowledge of animation history is surpassed only by her love for it; to Raymond Moniz, McCay's grandson, a proud promoter of his grandfather's reputation; and to John A. Fitzsimmons, who was Winsor McCay's neighbor, friend, assistant on two of the animated films, and an articulate eye-witness to animation history.

> The part of my life of which I am proudest is the fact that I was one of the first men in the world to make animated cartoons . . . I went into the business and spent thousands of dollars developing this new art. It required considerable time, patience, and careful thought—timing and drawing the pictures . . . this is the most fascinating work I have ever done—this business of making cartoons live on the screen.
>
> —Winsor McCay,
> *Cartoon and Movie Magazine*,
> April 1927

When Winsor McCay died at his home in Sheepshead Bay, N.Y. on July 26, 1934 of a massive cerebral hemorrhage at the approximated age of sixty-three (the *Herald Tribune* claimed "not even Mr. McCay knew his exact age"), his fame as one of the greatest of newspaper cartoonists seemed secure. His realistic fantasy strip, "Little Nemo in Slumberland," first appearing in The New York *Herald* on October 15, 1905, was an immediate success in newspapers in America and Europe. Thanks to McCay's brilliant imagination, and to an unsurpassed virtuosity of draftsmanship that never fails to astound, it raised comic-strip cartoons to a fine art.

On his way to such fame, and fortune, Winsor Zenis McCay, the son of a Michigan lumberman, was a painter of posters and advertisements for traveling circuses, melodrama companies, and freak show museums in Chicago and Cincinnati. Early on, he discovered his natural drawing ability, and this talent gained him a position, before he was twenty, as a staff artist on the Cincinnati *Commercial Tribune*. He was soon wooed away to work for five years on the rival Cincinnati *Enquirer*. In 1903, New York *Herald* and New York *Telegram* publisher James Gordon Bennett Jr. brought McCay to New York as a staff illustrator on his papers, covering crimes, trials, and social events. While at these papers McCay also created his early strips "Hungry Henrietta," "Little Sammy Sneeze," "Dream of the Rarebit Fiend," and "Little Nemo in Slumberland." After joining the Hearst Press in 1912, McCay continued "Nemo" and contributed powerful illustrations to accompany Arthur Brisbane's written discourses.

McCay's phenomenal energy and drive enabled him, in June 1906, to devise and star in his own unique vaudeville act, with which he toured successfully for eleven years until William Randolph Hearst insisted he sign a contract agreeing to abandon all stage work and concentrate only on his newspaper commitments; McCay unhappily signed. Part of the act had McCay in front of a large blackboard drawing in chalk a pictorial "Seven Ages of Man": facing profiles of a man and a woman were taken through progressive changes from cradle to old age in about forty pictures drawn at the rate of one every thirty seconds.

As early as 1905, McCay was experimenting with animation in the spacing and changes of the visuals in his comic strips, and his early vaudeville routine shows a fascination with and understanding of basic animation principles. Eventually, McCay found time in his busy life to create ten animated films, exhibited between 1911 and 1921, that are the forerunners of modern cartoon films. His painstaking experiments with timing, motion, characterization, and techniques, for which there were no precedents, rightfully place him as the true father of animation. McCay considered the animated film a new art form, and he treated it as a very personal, one-man show instead of a factory assembly-line. He once predicted "the coming artist will make his reputation not by pictures in still life, but by drawings that are animated. . . ."

But McCay never fully explored the commercial possibilities of animation and so never became widely recognized or wealthy from his work in the new medium.

Soon after his death, Winsor McCay's reputation fell into obscurity. Within the last decade, however, interest in McCay and all his works has revived. His original cartoon strips are selling for about $2,000 each; magazine articles and a glorious book of "Nemo" strips have been published; his films are regularly included in college film history courses. Gradually McCay is being restored to his rightful place as an important American artist, and his veteran colleagues are contributing to the restoration with their reminiscences of Winsor McCay at work.

John Fitzsimmons, the artist's friend and occasional assistant, recalls how McCay first became interested in animated motion pictures: "The New York *American* had a Sunday supplement, a half-page of the comic section, a little heavier than the news stock. Whoever made it drew a series of pictures you could cut out and put together with a rubber band and flick through your fingers. We were talking about that one day. That must have been the start because they were a novelty, they had advertising, some drug company. It got to be a fad for kids: get these things, cut them out. I know he was talking about it."

McCay himself confirms this opinion, for he wrote in 1927, "Winsor, Jr., as a small boy, picked up several flippers of 'magic pictures' and brought them home to me. From this germ I evolved the modern cartoon movies in 1909." (McCay's use of the date 1909 has caused it to be used erroneously quite often as the date of GERTIE THE DINOSAUR's debut. In fact, GERTIE was McCay's third animated film and was released on December 28, 1914.)

Fitzsimmons also remembers the famous bet between McCay and fellow Hearst cartoonists George (*Bringing Up Father*) McManus, Tom Powers, and Thomas "Tad" Dorgan, that led directly to McCay's first film, LITTLE NEMO: ". . .the three or four of them were down in a saloon near the old *American* building at William and Duane Streets right under the Brooklyn Bridge. They got to kidding in there. I think McManus kidded McCay because he was such a rapid worker. I never saw anyone who could work like McCay . . . Jokingly, McManus suggested that McCay make several thousand drawings, photograph them onto film and show the result in theaters . . .On a dare from his friends McCay claimed he would produce enough line drawings to sustain a four or five minute animated cartoon showing his 'Little Nemo' characters and would use the film as a special feature of his already popular vaudeville act."

McCay had to build his knowledge and working techniques of animation from literally nothing. At that time, silent movie projectors were flashing sixteen frames-per-second onto the screen, and according to Fitzsimmons, McCay "timed everything with split-second watches. That's how he got nice smooth action. For every second that was on the screen McCay would draw sixteen pictures . . .He had nothing to follow, he had to work everything out himself."

The artist animated his first three films on 6" x 8" sheets of translucent rice paper, lightly penciling in the animation extreme poses first and filling in the "inbetween" drawings of an action after. He added details and completed the individual drawings in Higgins black ink with Gilliot #290 pens in holders. For accurate registration from one drawing to the next, crosses were placed in the upper right and left corners and a serial number was assigned to each drawing in the lower right corner. Next, each rice paper drawing was mounted on slightly larger pieces of quality bristol board to ease handling and photographing.

As each sequence reached the mounting stage, it was then checked for smoothness of action on a device McCay built that was based on a penny arcade viewing machine. It was a box, 24" x 12" x 20", open at the top with a shaft running through it onto which a hub containing slits held the drawings. A crank revolved the hub and the drawings while a brass rod running across the top caught the cards momentarily, thus creating the interruption provided by the shutter of a projector necessary for the illusion of moving pictures.

THE FILMS

LITTLE NEMO. Approximately four thousand drawings were photographed onto one reel at the Vitagraph Studios in Brooklyn for McCay's first animated film. A live-action sequence, directed by J.S. Blackton (whose own film HUMOROUS PHASES OF FUNNY FACES in 1906 is regarded as the first frame-by-frame animation in motion pictures), was attached to the beginning and end of the film for commercial distribution. It was released in moving picture theaters on April 8, 1911, and shown as part of McCay's vaudeville act at New York's Colonial Theatre on April 12.

John Bunny, Vitagraph's star comedian, appears with McCay and others in the live-action which takes place in a studio set representing the restaurant where McCay made the bet with his peers. The tuxedoed gentlemen laugh continuously as McCay, who resembles James Cagney with a forelock, claims he will complete four thousand moving drawings. The scene shifts to a hallway outside a door labeled "Studio" as burly workmen deliver barrels of "ink" and huge cartons of "paper" to the diminutive McCay, dressed in vest and the fedora hat he always wore when working. Inside the studio, amid stacks of paper representing animation drawings, one can catch quick glimpses of the "checking machine," and close shots of a few of the rice paper sketches. The live portion also contains a brief scene of the method used to photograph the drawings: sketches were inserted into a wooden slot and shot one frame at a time by a horizontal camera.

The animation itself is quite wondrous; there is no plot and no backgrounds, so the pure line drawings delight us by magically metamorphosing. Flip and Impy appear, disappear, and chase each other in limbo, continually moving, and indicating perspective only through the gradual size changes in their bodies. Nemo is formed by lines resembling steel filings attracted to a magnet; he is resplendant in a cape, hat, and plumes (delicate pinks and yellows in the hand-colored original made by the Museum of Modern Art). He bows and conducts the Imp and Flip in funhouse-mirror contortions. Nemo sketches the Princess and presents her with a rose that grows just in time to be picked. A magnificent green dragon-chariot, brilliantly animated, carries off the two children to Slumberland. Flip and Impy return in a jalopy that explodes and they fall onto another McCay character, Dr. Pill. The live sequence shows McCay collecting his bet.

THE STORY OF A MOSQUITO. A notice in the Detroit *News Tribune* of March 24, 1912, describes how McCay was incorporating his animated films into the vaudeville act: ". . .Part 1 will be a series of blackboard drawings, entitled 'Youth to Old Age'. Part 2 will be the 'Little Nemo' moving pictures, made from Mr. McCay's drawings and depicted on the picture screen by a beautifully colored film, he being the first cartoonist in America to make animated pictures. Part 3 is called THE STORY OF A MOSQUITO and is said to be among the best comedy series of pictures yet devised by a cartoonist." The MOSQUITO film (January

Gertie, the first great lady of animated cartoons, was incorporated into McCay's vaudeville performance in 1914.

1912), his second ink-on-rice-paper animation, is a gruesomely funny short. Steve, a spiffy mosquito with a top-hat, discovers a sleeping drunk and bores his long proboscis into the man's nose, neck, and dome in gluttonous search for alcoholic blood. Soon he has partaken of so much he can hardly fly; in the end, Steve explodes.

GERTIE THE DINOSAUR. Remarking on the LITTLE NEMO and MOSQUITO animations, McCay once said, "While these made a big hit, the theatre patrons suspected some trick with wires. Not until I drew GERTIE THE DINOSAUR did the audience understand that I was making the drawings move." In the April 2, 1912, Rochester *Post*, McCay announced, "I...have already been approached by 'The American Historical Society' to draw pictures of prehistoric animals, the present evidences of which are limited to their skeletons, which would represent some connected incident in their lives... they could be shown on screens all over the world."

GERTIE was copyright on September 15, 1914, and is McCay's first animation using a detailed background. John Fitzsimmons assisted McCay on the film: "I did all the background work...He had a master drawing of the background and he would make the drawing featuring the animal. I would lay that over the master background and trace in pen and ink." Fitzsimmons also observed the filming of GERTIE: "I went up to the Vitagraph Company on Avenue M one night. [McCay] had a whole series of drawings and we were up there for hours...He went through this whole thing, photographed the whole damn reel...They developed the negative, made the positive print, put it on the screen and every other frame was a different shade. Because they were using arc lights, it would sputter and get bright, then go down, get dim, and sputter again. Well, the whole damn thing was no good. It had to be thrown out."

The final version of GERTIE was fitted with a live-action sequence showing McCay and cronies visiting New York's Museum of Natural History, roaming among dinosaur skeletons, and later, in tuxedoes again, at a restaurant where McCay bets he can make a dinosaur move and sets to work drawing. Gertie, the first real cartoon star, shyly makes her screen debut peering from behind some rocks. Soon a more assertive personality emerges and she devours trees, boulders, and fruit. "I lectured in connection with the screen presentation," McCay wrote years later, "inviting Gertie to eat an apple, which I held up to her. Gertie would lower her long neck and swallow the fruit, much to the delight of the audience." Gertie also drinks a lake, tosses a mammoth over her shoulder, and dances. Admonished, she cries, and the audience is won over by the inspired touch of a diplodicus weeping like an over-grown child. Sixty-year-old GERTIE is as fresh as ever in conception and execution—a masterpiece of early personality animation technique.

THE SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA. On Friday, May 7, 1915, the English Cunard liner, Lusitania, homeward bound from New York to Liverpool, was torpedoed without warning by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. The ship sank in eighteen minutes, killing almost twelve hundred, including over a hundred Americans. The political and emotional response to this tragedy was a major factor in bringing the United States into World War I. "McCay was especially incensed at such wanton brutality," Fitzsimmons recalls. "He proposed to make an animated cartoon graphically depicting the horrible tragedy."

Released on July 20, 1918, this film was the first McCay animation to use celluloid instead of paper for the action drawings, thus allowing a stationary background to be used that didn't have to be redrawn each frame. "Binding posts were attached to drawing boards," says Fitzsimmons, who on this film was again McCay's assistant, "and the sheets of celluloid were punched to fit snugly to them, thus the annoying problem of movement or shifting of drawings while being traced was reduced to a minimum...[It] facilitated the photographing of the drawings immeasurably... I did the water, the waves. He made a set of sixteen waves and numbered them one to sixteen, and those waves would roll nice and smooth. We had one scene of the Lusitania at night going across [on] about seven hundred and fifty drawings. His number one drawing and my number one wave would be the same; for his seventeenth drawing I would start my number one again."

The final film contains approximately twenty-five thousand drawings on cels and took twenty-two months to complete. There is a wonderful use of gray tones, fascinating patterns of the white and black smoke effects, and McCay's attention to detail and perspective in scenes of the submarine submerging while speeding toward the ship, and of the ship capsizing. It is quite a beautiful film, and must have greatly affected audiences of the time—who were unaware that the Lusitania had been heavily armed, and that the English Admiralty had been negligent in protecting the ship.

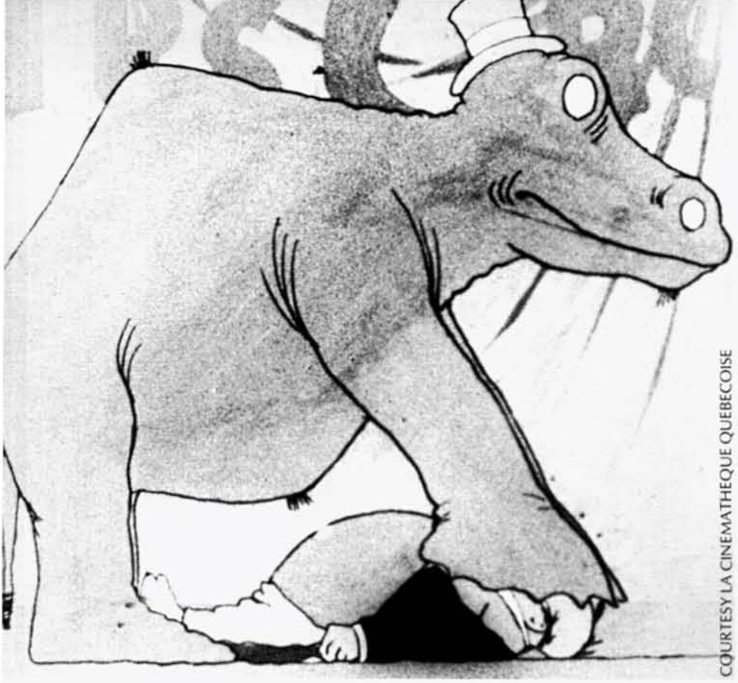
THE CENTAURS. Fragmented scenes are all that remain of this fascinating cel animation. A woman with an upswept hairdo is seen walking, nude to the waist, through a birch forest; soon we discover she has the body of a calico horse replete with white tail. A male centaur throws a rock and hits a vulture. He approaches the female and they slowly walk toward a grandmother centaur and a grandfather (who resembles George Bernard Shaw), presumably to ask permission to marry. All the animation appears to be on one cel-level because all the characters start and stop moving at the same time. A baby's head and torso on a pony's trunk enters and shows off, and the film abruptly ends. The design of the "centaurettes" in the Pastoral-sequence of FANTASIA might have been influenced by the McCay film; many of the older Disney storymen undoubtedly saw the McCay films when they were first released. (Dick Huemer, in fact, re-created the GERTIE vaudeville routine from memory for a Fifties *Disneyland* TV show.)

FLIP'S CIRCUS. Fragments of scenes from this film-return of the clever Flip. Here he juggles, balances, and attempts stunts with a Gertie-like creature who eats part of his car. There are many "cel flashes" in this film indicating light reflections on the celluloid, and three-frame captions could mean this was a work print.

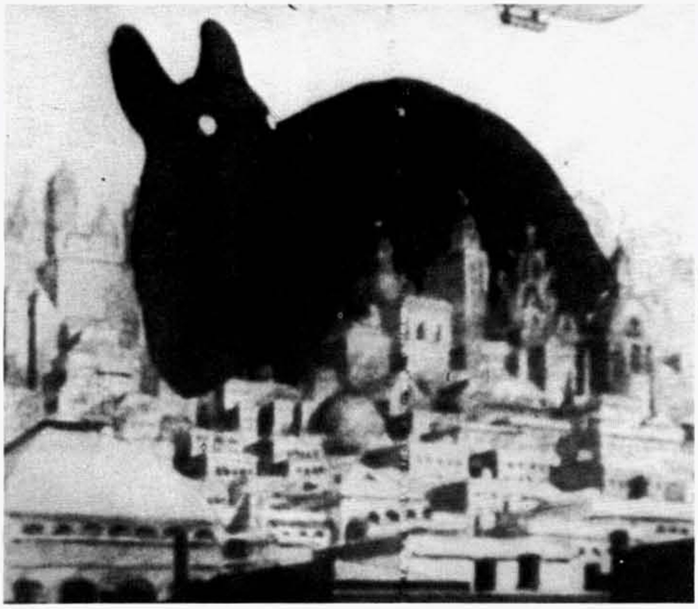
GERTIE ON TOUR. The shortest of the McCay prints, this fragmented film shows Gertie walking near a railroad, looking at a frog, stopping a trolley car, with backgrounds of the New York City skyline, and a strange scene of Gertie dancing on her hind legs on a rock surrounded by several other dinosaurs. There appear to be two cel-levels used, one for her head and tail, and another for her body; again, captions are shown for two or three frames.

DREAMS OF THE RAREBIT FIEND: THE PET. This first of a series of three DREAMS, all distributed in 1921, tells the tale of a man who eats some disagreeable rarebit and dreams that his small house pet grows into a ten-story high monster after drinking a barrel of "rough on rats." There are impressive scenes of the monster pet roaming *à la* KING KONG through city buildings, and his final destruction by an army of bombing planes. The film reminds one of Tex Avery's KING-SIZE CANARY (1947) in which a cat and a mouse drink so much "Jumbo-Gro" they can hardly fit on top of the world.

DREAMS OF THE RAREBIT FIEND: BUG VAUDEVILLE. A hobo complains about a rarebit handout and falls asleep under a tree. He dreams he is watching a vaudeville performance of juggling grasshoppers, an eccentric-dancer Daddy Long-Legs, a trick-cyclist cockroach, and a butterfly *corps de ballet*. Finally, the hobo is at-



COURTESY LA CINEMATHEQUE QUEBECOISE



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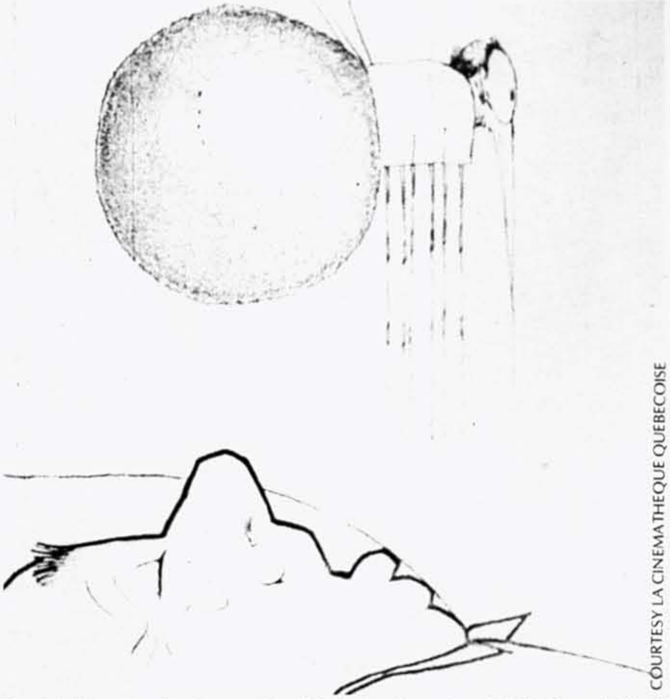

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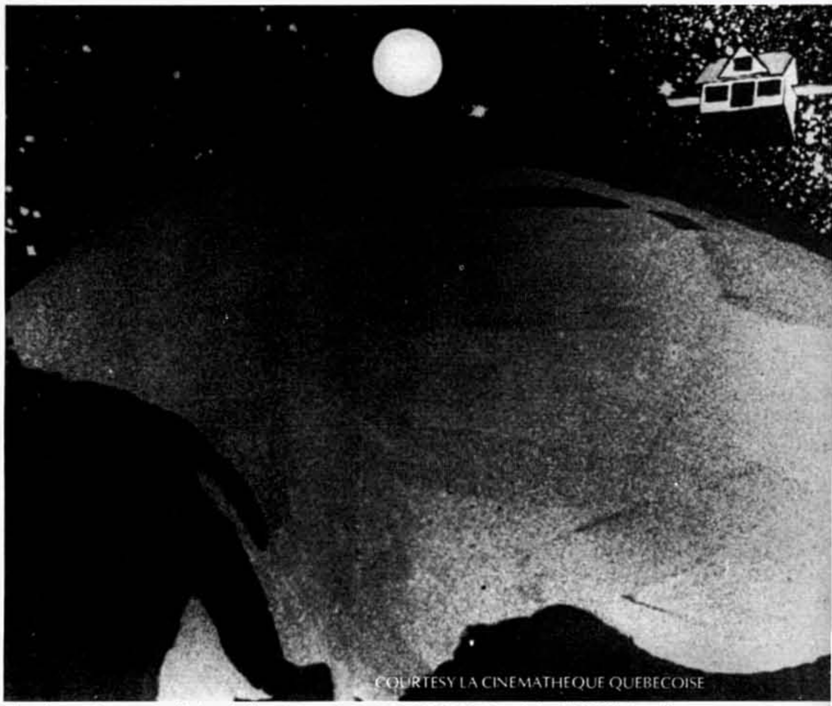

COURTESY LA CINEMATHEQUE QUEBECOISE

Top left: Flip, a favorite character from McCay's epic comic strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, gets the worst of it in a balancing act in FLIP'S CIRCUS. Top right: THE PET swallows a barrel of "rough on rats" and grows into a ten-storey high monster, finally destroyed by an army of airplanes and a dirigible (1921). Bottom left: Steve, a dapper but greedy mosquito, comes to a bad end, in THE STORY OF A MOSQUITO (1912). Bottom right: The outer-space effects make DREAMS OF A RAREBIT FIEND: THE FLYING HOUSE (1921) McCay's 2001, eighty years early.

tacked by a large black spider and this awakens him. A marvelously entertaining cartoon, several cel-levels, lovely gray-tone background renderings, and clever animation.

DREAMS OF THE RAREBIT FIEND: THE FLYING HOUSE. A title card announces the film was "Drawn by Robert Winsor McCay using the Winsor McCay process of animated drawing." This father and son collaborative effort is a fantasy of a wife who eats some rarebit and dreams her husband has equipped their house with rings and a propeller in order to fly away from their creditors. The animation of the humans is rather stiff and repetitious, but the special effects animation of the house flying higher and higher into outer space is quite impressive, a sort of 2001 of the Twenties.

In conclusion, one notices the influence McCay's theatrical background had on his film subjects and action; most of the films are presented in a rather stagey, as opposed to cinematic, way, with extremely limited use of close-ups. In the first three animations, the action is continuous, as in "real time", and makes no use of cuts; changes of angle are accomplished by the movement of the characters.

The emphasis in McCay's animated films is on making the impossible seem plausible. This is accomplished mostly through making the characters change shapes, dance, juggle, and fly in masterful perspective through space. Limited personality touches, yes, but never limited animation; cycle drawings repeating, yes, but always well-planned.

It seems a pity McCay never continued working in animation, with sound and color, setting up his own studio, and producing more and more cartoon films. But he never did, for he knew his own needs very well. As John Fitzsimmons says: "First of all, McCay was an artist. I don't think he would ever sit in an office and have a dozen people drawing the stuff. He got more fun out of his own work than anybody I ever saw. Every once in a while all of a sudden he'd bust out laughing at the cartoons he was doing. McCay, he loved to work. I never saw anybody love to work like he did." ⁂

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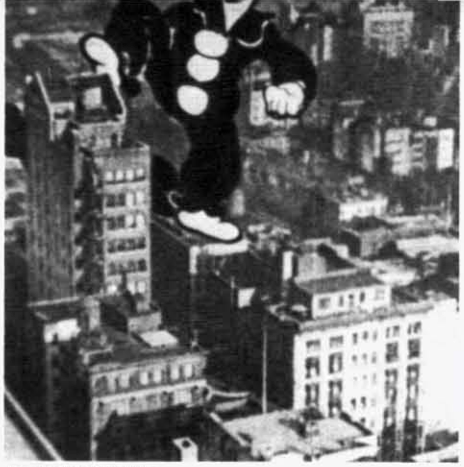
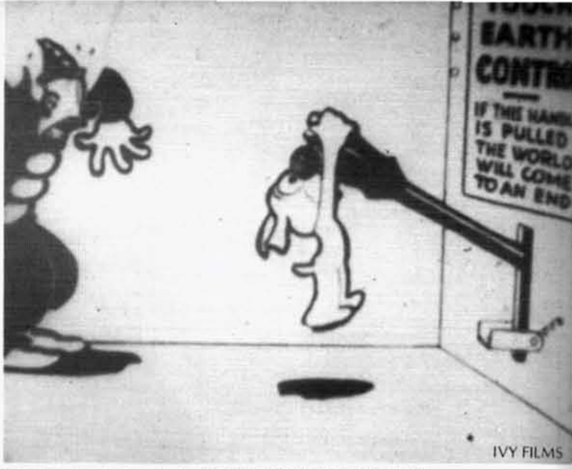
Max at drawing board with Ko-Ko.



Ko-Ko in BEDTIME.



IVY FILMS

Imminent catastrophe in KO-KO'S EARTH CONTROL.

MAX AND DAVE

The inventor Max and the inventive Dave built a cartoon industry, with

Max Fleischer was born in Austria in 1885 and came to the United States at the age of five. After some training in art and mechanics at the Art Students' League, Cooper Union, and the Mechanics and Tradesmen's School, Max sought employment at the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*. It is said that he offered to pay the Art Editor two dollars a week for the training: the startled editor hired him on the spot.

Max left the *Eagle*, and after several years as a photo engraver, returned to journalism as the Art Editor of *Popular Science Monthly*, which allowed him to pursue his mechanical and artistic interests. Encouraged by Waldemar Kaempffert, the Editor-in-Chief, Max, with his brother Dave, attempted to develop a method to facilitate the production of motion picture cartoons by machinery, in order to cut the costs and improve the motion of animation. The result of their experimentation was the rotoscope, which projected a film of a live figure frame-by-frame, serving as a guide for the drawing of an animated figure.

In 1915, the Fleischers had completed their first cartoon by this new method. The film, one hundred and seventy-five feet in length, starred Ko-Ko the Clown, a rotoscoped version of Dave Fleischer in a clown suit. Cartoon in hand, Max went out in search of a distributor, and found John Bray, his erstwhile colleague on the *Eagle*, whose studio was the exclusive producer of cartoons for Paramount Famous Lasky. Bray hired the Fleischers to produce a series of short cartoons that featured Ko-Ko, but the First World War interrupted the association.

In 1917, the Army established a film studio at Fort Sill to produce training films. Max enlisted in the army, and due to a series of articles he had previously done on military equipment for *Popular Science*, he was assigned the direction of a series of training films. These animated films, HOW TO READ AN ARMY MAP and HOW TO FIRE A LEWIS GUN (both 1917), may have been the first educational cartoons, although Bray has a similar claim. Dave spent the war in Washington, editing films for the Medical Corps. After the end of the war, Max and Dave returned to the Bray Studio, until 1921, when they began to release their "Out of the Inkwell" cartoons through Winkler, then Standard, Arrow, and Red Seal Pictures.

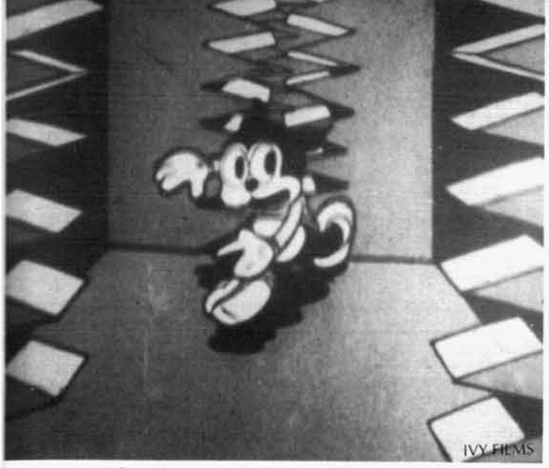
MODELING, an early "Out of the Inkwell" cartoon (1921), begins, as usual, with Max at his drawing board. He sketches circles that form themselves into the shape of Ko-Ko the Clown, who complains that he is weak because Max uses stale ink. Max demands that the clown show more pep, and prods him into action with a sharp pen. As Ko-Ko cavorts, we see another part of the studio, where Dave is modeling a likeness of an ugly client in clay. The model complains that the bust looks too much like him, and Max, after drawing a winter scene into Ko-Ko's world, goes to arbitrate the dispute.

Ko-Ko, left alone, slips along the ice, but regains his balance and skates confidently off screen, sticking out his tongue at us. He reappears over the horizon, and traces a caricature of the model on the ice. A polar bear steals Ko-Ko's hat, and after a long chase, Ko-Ko rolls the bear up into a giant snowball, which he molds into the likeness of the model.

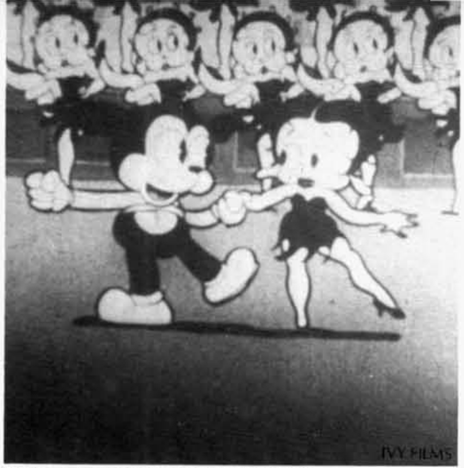
The three men are angered by this display, so Ko-Ko takes refuge in the sculpture. Max, Dave, and the model are horrified by the subsequent behavior of the bust's nose, as it begins to crawl along the floor. Terrified, they jump on the piece of clay, but Ko-Ko escapes to the drawing board. The men fight until Max realizes who is to blame. Ko-Ko sees this, and jumps back into the safety of the inkwell. In revenge, Max pours out the ink in symbolic filicide.

In MODELING, the Fleischers tried to solve two of the early problems of animation: elaborate movement, and the illusion of depth. Through the use of the rotoscope, Ko-Ko was able to move in an elaborate and smooth manner through a live set. The Fleischers reveled in the freedom their invention gave them, keeping their silent cartoons in almost constant motion. MODELING illustrates significant themes in the Fleischers' work. The animated characters move without necessary cause, and often in a rhythmic pattern. This movement is not limited to change in location. Many things in the film change their shape or properties, such as the drawn circles that transform themselves into the living Ko-Ko, or the nose of the sculpture that crawls like a worm along the floor. These constant transformations run throughout the Fleischer silents. In BEDTIME (1921), Ko-Ko grows gigantic, and stalks, Kong-like, through the streets of New York. In KO-KO'S HAUNTED HOUSE (1928), the inkwell is stretched into a model house, and Ko-Ko's pet dog Fitz turns himself inside out. In HAREM SCARUM (1928), the chopped-off heads of Ko-Ko and Fitz sprout legs and walk back to their bodies. The Fleischer cartoon world is one in which everything is potentially something else, with a resultingly bizarre imagery that finds its fullest expression in the cartoons of the early Thirties.

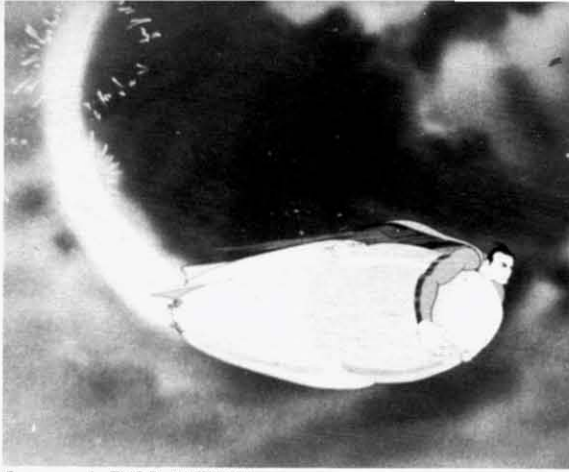
The plots of most early Fleischer cartoons are cyclical and fatalistic. In SPARRING PARTNER (1921), a tiny Ko-Ko is



Fraternity rites in BIMBO'S INITIATION.



Bimbo & Betty in BIMBO'S INITIATION.



Superman in THE BULLETEERS.

FLEISCHER

by Mark Langer

a little help from Ko-Ko, Betty Boop, Popeye, and the Bouncing Ball.

unjustly punished by Max. At the film's end, a shrunken Max is punished by Ko-Ko. More usually, Ko-Ko's fate is dictated by Max, his father-tormentor; the cartoon shows how the clown both tempts fate and struggles against it. In KO-KO'S HAUNTED HOUSE, Ko-Ko and Fitz are tormented by an animator who rings a gong and blows air into their model house. The characters ask Max for help, and he draws hundreds of Ko-Kos, which frighten the animator out of the studio.

At times, the conflict between the real and comic worlds grows increasingly violent. In KO-KO'S EARTH CONTROL (1927), Ko-Ko and Fitz come to a shed, they play with the controls, and Fitz attempts to pull a lever marked "Danger! Do not touch earth control. If the handle is pulled, the world will come to an end." Despite Ko-Ko's desperate interference, Fitz succeeds, and the cartoon world begins to crumble. The two characters jump out of the drawing to the supposed safety of the Fleischers' office window sill. Much to their surprise, they see that the real world is also being destroyed, as the ground shakes, and time runs backwards. Horrified, Ko-Ko and Fitz jump back into the inkwell, leaving the world in a state of chaos.

The filmed process of drawing Ko-Ko at the beginning of almost every silent cartoon shows a Fleischer fascination with mechanics and processes that is evident in other ways. In KO-KO THE HOT SHOT (1924), Max is shown flipping through a stack of cels; in KO-KO'S EARTH CONTROL, we see a cartoon explanation of how nature is controlled. Much of this fascination probably originated with Max, whose interest in mechanics brought him to animation, led him to patent more than a dozen animation processes, and was to lead the Fleischers to make a number of historically significant films in the Twenties.

The Fleischers' interest in educational films did not end after their short Army film experience. In 1922, Max attempted a four-reel animated explanation of THE EINSTEIN THEORY OF RELATIVITY (1923). This first-ever animated feature was played primarily for schools, and was so completely forgotten that a publicity sheet issued by the Fleischer Studio in 1938 neglected to mention it. THE EINSTEIN THEORY OF RELATIVITY was followed by a partly animated feature, EVOLUTION (1925), a minor sensation, made the same year as the Scopes Monkey Trial.

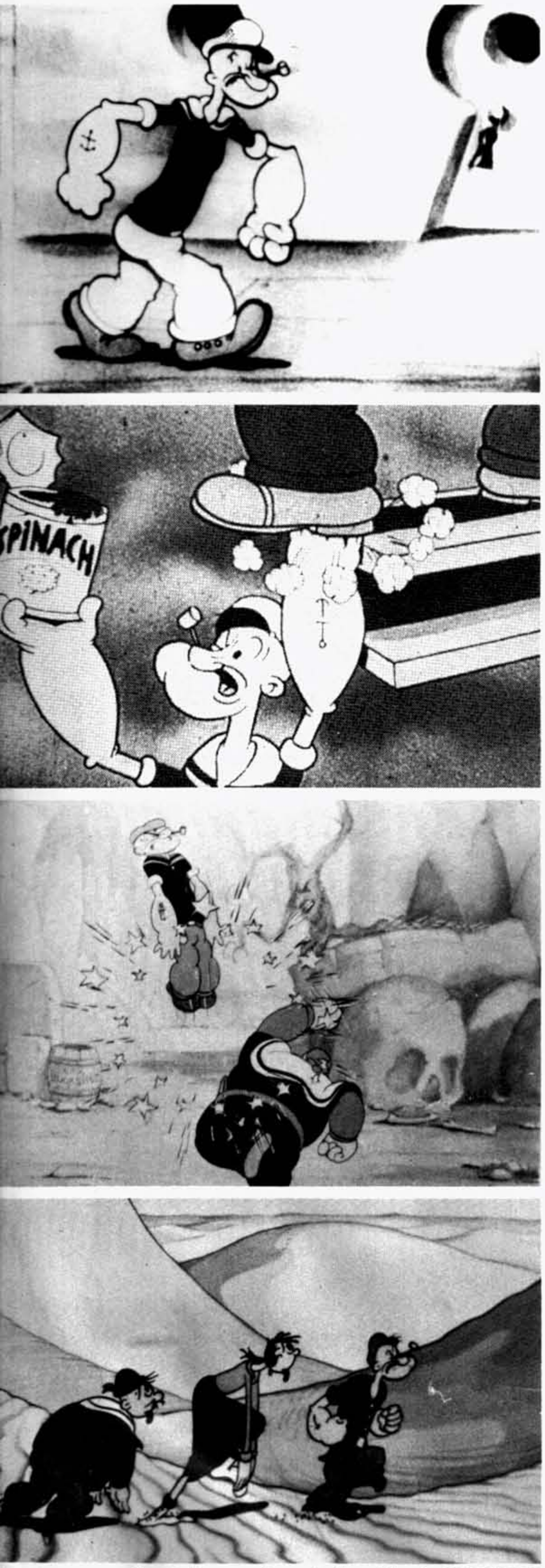
An even more significant achievement followed. In 1924, the Fleischers, working with Dr. Lee DeForest of the DeForest Phonofilm Company, produced the first sound-on-film cartoon, OH MABEL. In its first public showing, the audience refused to watch the feature until the cartoon was rerun. OH MABEL was the first of the "Song Car-Tunes," which were more generally distributed in silent versions. However, the sound prints were true synchronized sound films. In MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME (1926), a dog repairs his false teeth, plays a trombone, and requests that the audience sing along and "follow the bouncing ball," all in perfect synch. Generally, the "Song Car-Tunes" were cheaply animated in comparison with the "Out of the Inkwell" films. Most began with a stock clip of Ko-Ko and the Ko-Ko Kwartette, who would introduce the song. Then the lyrics would roll by, accompanied by the now-famous Bouncing Ball. The last few choruses of the song would have a cartoon character replace the ball, and perform amusing actions as it jumped from word to word. Today, the films seem overlong with their endless choruses, but are still imaginative and funny.

The "Song Car-Tunes," although popular, were made only until 1926. The Red Seal Picture Corporation, never a financially stable company, had undergone a number of changes of management, ending with Max Fleischer as president. Despite publicity tours, and the introduction of the new live-action two-reel series "Keep 'Em Guessing" and "Carrie of the Chorus," the company closed in September 1926, and the Fleischers were without a distributor.

In 1927, the Fleischers released KO-KO PLAYS POOL through Paramount, an association that was to last for fifteen years. At first, the Fleischers produced a series of silent "Inkwell Imps" cartoons with Ko-Ko, but with the immmense popularity of Disney's talkies, Max and Dave returned to sound cartoons.

THE SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK (1929), a "Screen Song," was the Fleischers' first sound cartoon for Paramount, and marked a return to the "bouncing ball" format of the "Song Car-Tunes." Paramount provided the records or film clips, and the animators, working under Dave's direction, would devise cartoon action to accompany the music. Often, as in I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD YOU RASCAL YOU (1932), they would incorporate animated characters into previously filmed live sequences. This use of pre-recorded material was closer to today's animation methods than was the early Disney method of post-recording.

At first, there was no story department at the Fleischers' studio. Max and Dave, as producer and director, would receive recordings from Paramount, and would decide on a rough action outline or theme. Then Dave would go to work with the



Top to bottom: Popeye's film debut in POPEYE THE SAILOR; Popeye hangs precariously from a girder in DREAM WALKING; skull-rock background in POPEYE THE SAILOR MEETS SINBAD THE SAILOR; Popeye, Olive, and Wimpy in POPEYE THE SAILOR MEETS ALI BABA'S FORTY THIEVES.

We are grateful to Ivy Films, the exclusive distributors of all the Betty Boop cartoons, for their generosity in furnishing prints for this piece.

animators. The animators were divided into units, each unit working on a different cartoon. The head animators would listen to the music with Dave, and would devise the action of the film, subject to Dave's approval. This gave the head animators more freedom than the Disney animators, but not as much as the animators at Warners were to have.

The new sound series was far better animated than the first, but marked the decline of Ko-Ko the Clown, who was quickly losing his popularity to Mickey Mouse. The "Inkwell Imps" silents ended in 1929, and were replaced by the "Talkartoon" series. Max appeared less frequently in the films, and Ko-Ko was joined by Bimbo, a more anthropomorphic dog than Fitz. Bimbo's presence failed to restore the series to the success of earlier silent Ko-Ko's.

In August 1930, the Fleischers introduced a new character, developed with animator Grim Natwick, called Betty Boop, who first appeared as a dog-like character in the "Talkartoon" DIZZY DISHES (1930). In 1931, after advertising for a girl "with a cute voice," the Fleischers hired Mae Questel to provide the Helen Kane-ish voice for the new character. Questel's voice first appeared in BETTY CO-ED (1931), which opens with Betty Boop as she is carried by cheering college students. We see Bimbo walking to Betty's door with flowers and candy. He is seized by two fraternity men, who bounce him into the air with a blanket. Bimbo falls into a tree, which comes to life and deposits the hapless dog at the fraternity door. After a live-action sequence of Rudy Vallee singing the title song, Bimbo gets to see Betty, and a number of shots give a satirical view of college graduation.

BETTY CO-ED illustrates the weakness of many of the "Screen Songs." The live-action sequence in the middle of the cartoon disturbs its kinetic pace. The film just stops while Vallee sings, although it may not have seemed so to theater audiences who joined him in song. Also, at this time, the Betty Boop character was not yet fully formed, being awkwardly half-woman, half-dog.

As in other Fleischer cartoons, there is a tremendous sense of fatalism in BETTY CO-ED. Bimbo cannot get to Betty through his own attempts, but is brought to her by chance. He is tormented by fraternity members and struggles with an anthropomorphic tree in an expression of violence and mutability. BETTY CO-ED also contains strongly sexual elements.

Not all of the early sound Fleischer cartoons were psychodramas. Some were revues, composed of a number of loosely-related sight gags and musical numbers. BETTY BOOP M.D. (1932) has Betty and friends in a medicine show, selling Jippo. The cartoon is a dance of metamorphosis and death as various characters drink Jippo. An old man drinks and jumps into his grave. The entire cast marches towards the camera, their bodies elongating in time with the music. Finally, a baby drinks, and turns into Mr. Hyde. Despite the gruesomeness of these images, the effect is pleasant because the characters' movements are so closely choreographed with the infectious jazz score (penned by Lou Fleischer).

Other revue cartoons entered the realm of social satire. In BETTY BOOP FOR PRESIDENT (1932), the Fleischers parody Prohibition and campaign promises as Betty imitates a number of politicians, including Herbert Hoover. BETTY BOOP'S UPS AND DOWNS (1932) is the Fleischers' *Grapes of Wrath*, where everyone on earth is dispossessed. Neither cartoon has a plot; instead, they gently poke fun at the problems of the country in a number of short, almost unrelated sight gags, and pleasant, but forgettable songs. Their charm lies in their light-hearted approach to the subject matter, in contrast to the overpowering imagery of the psycho-sexual dramas.

In 1932, the Fleischers arranged with King Features Syndicate to bring to the screen E.C. Segar's popular *Thimble Theatre* comic strip character, Popeye the Sailor. Popeye's debut was in a Betty Boop cartoon, POPEYE THE SAILOR (1933), where he was first shown in a newspaper that announced that Popeye was now a movie star. Ko-Ko was merely a re-creation of Dave; Betty had appeared with her "Uncle Max" in a few cartoons. But Popeye was the first Fleischer character who was independent of his creator, and the only one who never returned to the inkwell.

POPEYE THE SAILOR provided the basic plot of many Popeye cartoons. Popeye and Bluto are rivals for Olive Oyl's love. They compete for her favors, and Popeye eventually wins by eating his spinach, and beating Bluto in a fight. The early Popeye was a simple gruff character, but with the development of a story department in 1932, and with the later addition of actor-writer Jack Mercer (who provided Popeye's delightful ad libs), the characters attained a richness denied earlier Fleischer cartoon characters.

In A DREAM WALKING (1934), we see development in both character and style. The film begins with a REAR WINDOW-ish track along an apartment building wall, revealing Popeye, Bluto, and Olive asleep in their separate apartments. Olive begins to sleepwalk, and exits through a window, upsetting a flowerpot. The crash awakens Popeye and Bluto, who rush out to save her.

Olive walks along rooftops into a building under construction. The two sailors struggle with each other for the privilege of rescuing her. Their fight goes on within a marvelously mechanistic geometric environment of moving beams and girders, with the sailors using the beams and tools as weapons. After eating his spinach, Popeye wins the struggle, but Olive has walked right off the building, and is only saved from falling by the miraculous but seemingly inevitable presence of swinging beams that appear as she is about to step out into space.

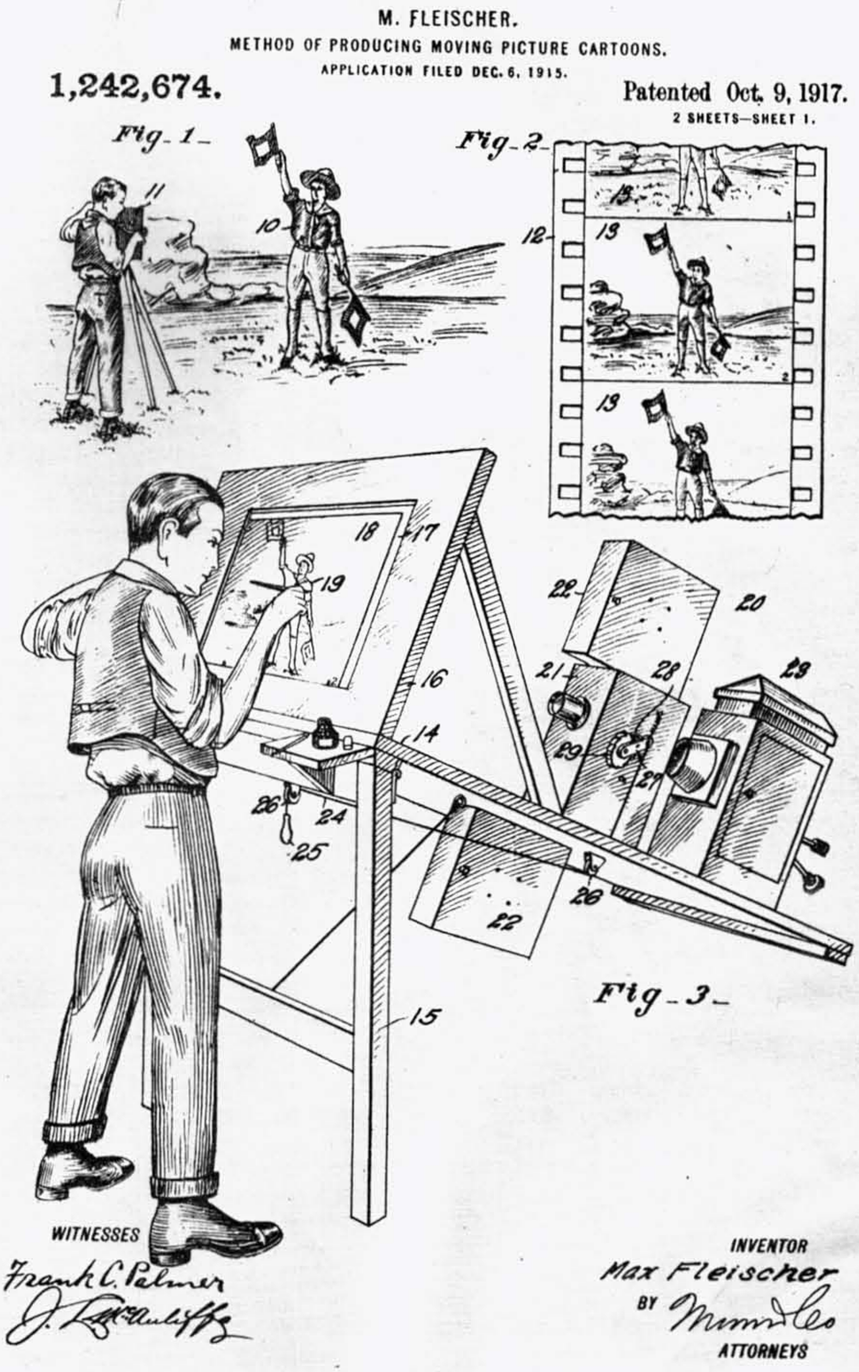
Popeye reaches Olive's window just as she reclines peacefully back into bed. The alarm clock goes off, Olive wakes, and thinks that Popeye is a peeping tom. As she hurls everything she can find at him, Popeye turns to the audience and says, "I saw my duty and done it, 'cause I'm Popeye the Sailor Man!" Popeye's invincibility is somewhat modified by his lack of success in love in A DREAM WALKING, and his endurance of the slings and arrows of outraged Olive reveals a stoic side of his nature.

FOR BETTER OR WORSER (1935) combines grotesquerie and pessimism with the Fleischer cyclical plot. Popeye and Bluto live in a filthy tenement labelled "Bachelor Apts." After burning his dinner once more, Popeye says "It's no use, I have to get me a wife." He and Bluto visit a matrimonial agency, and both select a picture of Olive. As soon as Olive enters, in gown and veil, Bluto grabs her and tries to carry her off to a Justice of the Peace. Popeye follows, but in the struggle is covered with cement, and frozen into a statue (yet another metamorphosis). As Bluto drags Olive into Justice Wimpy's office Popeye manages to move under a pile driver, which breaks the cement and crushes him grotesquely into an accordian shape. Undaunted, Popeye rushes into Wimpy's office, takes his spinach, and defeats Bluto. But when Popeye sees his bride, looking none the better from her ordmal, he rushes back to his apartment, where he picks up an eggbeater and beats *oeuf*.

By the mid-Thirties, the Fleischer studio was rivalled only by Walt Disney Productions. Although Disney was more "artistically" respectable at the time, Popeye had outstripped Mickey Mouse as the most popular cartoon character in the world. Both companies sought to refine their products in order to market more spectacular cartoons, through longer color films.

Many of the early Fleischer cartoons were tinted, including at least one sound "Song Car-Tune," HAS ANYBODY SEEN KELLY? (1926), but the practice was discontinued in 1929, because it was unprofitable. Disney's success with Technicolor changed that; and in 1934, the Fleischers produced their first "Color Classic", POOR CINDERELLA. This was shot in a two-color process, because Disney's arrangement with Technicolor prevented other animators from using the process until 1935. Max compensated for this technical deficiency by devising the stereoptical process, which, he claimed, introduced a three-dimensional effect to animation.

This process was a refinement of the first Ko-Ko cartoons. Previously, Max and Dave had presented their cartoon characters in a real world. The stereoptical process adapted a real set to a cartoon world. A miniature set was constructed on a circular table, and the cels were mounted in front of it. When the set was photographed through the cels, it appeared that the characters were moving in the set. By rotating the table, the Fleischers could get the effect of tracking through a three-dimensional cartoon set. The effect was quite startling. In LITTLE DUTCH MILL (1934), the Fleischers rotate a centrally pivoted model of the inside of a windmill, as two cartoon children are chased by the villain. The three-dimensional effect given by the turning set gives a visual as well as an emotional, excitement to the scene.



Aside from their use as technical exercises, the "Color Classics" were experiments with sentiment. All too often, though, they became exercises in the most maudlin sentimentality, outdoing Disney's excesses. In SOMEWHERE IN DREAMLAND (1936), two poor little children visit the saccharine wonders of Dreamland in their sleep; when the children awaken, they find that local merchants have visited their hovel, and transformed it into a Dreamland on earth for the little tykes and their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 53

SEX, DEATH, AND BETTY BOOP

Images of sexuality and mortality, startling in their Freudian density, resound throughout the Fleischer cartoons. Generally, the sexual elements were stronger in the sound cartoons, while the Fleischers' horrifyingly morbid humor, worthy of the East European Starevich, was emphasized in their silent work. The silent HAREM SCARUM (1928), for example, begins with a live-action sequence showing a sultan as he paces the floor, ranting, "It's time that boob was here with the treasure." Enter the boob bearing a box, which he gives to his master. The sultan opens the box, revealing an inkwell, from which he produces Ko-Ko and Fitz. In one of the most gruesome moments in animation, the sultan picks them up, pulls out a knife, and slices their heads off, the heads fall to the ground, blink once, and lie motionless. The violence here is committed by a living character upon a cartoon character, thus violating a basic law of cartoon fantasy: that only a totally artificial environment turns violence into humor. The Fleischers' sound cartoons were not quite so grotesque as the silents in their use of sadism and catastrophe. When violence was later used, its impact was softened by ritualization and stylization, as in the "Popeye" series.

Sexual elements in silent Fleischer cartoons were less obvious than those in the sound cartoons. In NO EYES TODAY (1929), Ko-Ko loses his eyes after he ogles a bathing beauty. This punishment for sexuality expresses a castration fear that is expressed in the 1924 KO-KO NEEDLES THE BOSS (where Ko-Ko's weapon wilts in a duel with Max), and in HAREM SCARUM (where Ko-Ko and Fitz are chased through a harem by razor-wielding guards). In BETTY CO-ED, Bimbo tries to visit a temptress. His inability to see Betty by himself, and the way in which he is held by the motherly tree, reduce him to an impotent, childlike state.

Bimbo's loss of masculinity is dealt with again in the Talkartoon BIMBO'S INITIATION (1931). Bimbo falls down a manhole, where is is invited to join the masculine, animal-like Order of Kucamunga Fraternity. Bimbo's refusal is a refusal to recognize his sexual identity. The fraternity members torture Bimbo, but he escapes. Betty Boop calls "Come in, Big Boy," and Bimbo responds to this sexual invitation, following Betty down a long vaginal corridor, as huge blades shash down, and traps clash, in an expression of his castration fears. Bimbo finally emerges in a room filled with the fraternity members. One of them removes his pelt to reveal that he is Betty. Bimbo agrees to join, and is rewarded for this assumption of his sex role by the sight of all of the fraternity members stripping to reveal, in another metamorphosis, that they are all Betty Boops.

In the 1932 MINNIE THE MOOCHER, the Fleischers created a film replete with metamorphoses, sexual imagery, and fears of death and the unknown. Flowers, trees, a blot of lipstick all come to life, and Betty's nagging father is transformed into a phonograph. Within Betty's home, this mutability is harmless, but outside it can become a dangerous and frightening force. Betty is unhappy with her home life, but the sight of ghosts in the cave to which she flees with Bimbo persuades her to return home, just as Ko-Ko must return to the inkwell.

In MINNIE THE MOOCHER, Betty and Bimbo elope, and flee to a deep cave (a place associated with sexuality in the Fleischer cartoons). Inside the cave, they are confronted with symbols of fertility and death: an androgynous walrus dances with phallic tusks and feminine grace; skeletons court each other and dance; nursing kittens consume their mothers. Betty and Bimbo are frightened not only by the ghosts, but by horrible images of their union.

The visual richness of MINNIE THE MOOCHER is matched by SNOW WHITE (1933). Pursuing Betty through a cave, Ko-Ko is transformed into a pole-shaped ghost, expressing both sexuality and death. The walls of the cave are painted with ghastly scenes of dancing and gambling skeletons. As Ko-Ko progresses through the cave, his body elongates and contracts in time with his singing of "St. James Infirmary Blues," and he turns into a twenty-dollar gold piece in illustration of the lyrics.

Different elements of this scene work at varying levels. Ko-Ko's phallic shape, and the death images on the walls of the vaginal cave, confirm the link with the visions of sex and death in MINNIE THE MOOCHER. But Ko-Ko's movements, his transformation into a gold coin, and the singing of "St. James Infirmary Blues" do not fit the chase situation. The cave sequence becomes a musical and visual interlude within the chase.

The relationship between Popeye and Olive Oyl bears some resemblance to that which existed between Bimbo and Betty Boop. Whereas the early Betty Boop represents a comically bohemian and attractive sexuality, Olive is a thin spinsterly figure who dreams of sex with a pile of romance magazines by her bed. But dreaming is all she can do. Whenever she is confronted with the possibility of sex through an abduction by the powerful Bluto, she reflexively struggles to save her virtue. Popeye loves Olive, but is usually rendered harmless by Bluto, the elemental male. Spinach acts as a kind of wonder drug for Popeye's impotence, strengthening the old one-eyed sailor so that he may win his love and beat a more vigorous rival.

In many ways, the Fleischer's Superman character resembles Popeye. Both are invincible, both series of cartoons often revolved around a fight. Popeye and Superman are each involved with foolish women, and neither relationship is physically consummated. Both characters must perform a ritual action before they gain their strength—Popeye must eat his spinach, and Superman must change into his uniform. The sexual conflict between Clark Kent and his alter ego Superman is similar to that between Popeye and Bluto in certain Popeye cartoons, such as YA GOTTA BE A FOOTBALL HERO (1935). Just as Olive falls in love with the powerful Bluto and rejects the mild Popeye, so Lois Lane rejects the mild Clark Kent in favor of the stronger Superman. Unlike Popeye, Clark Kent is never united with his love, and the sexual tensions are not resolved as they are in the Popeye cartoons.

ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP, a Popeye two-reeler of 1939, probably contains the last homosexual joke in Fleischer cartoons. The genie of the lamp is an effeminate character—the final echo of a series of jokes like the one in DIZZY RED RIDING HOOD (1931), when Betty skips merrily along to Granny's house, picking flowers, and singing "A flower for Granny, for Granny . . ." A tree minces out, grabs her flowers, and sings "The fairies like them too!"

By the end of the Thirties, the Betty Boop cartoons had undergone a considerable change. Betty had softened from a sexy actress to a responsible young woman. Her dress lengthened, she acquired a dog, grandfather, baby brother, and the duties of house cleaning and baby sitting. The character of Betty Boop was unable to sustain the change from the lower class sensuality of the Depression to the middle class respectability of the films of the late Thirties.

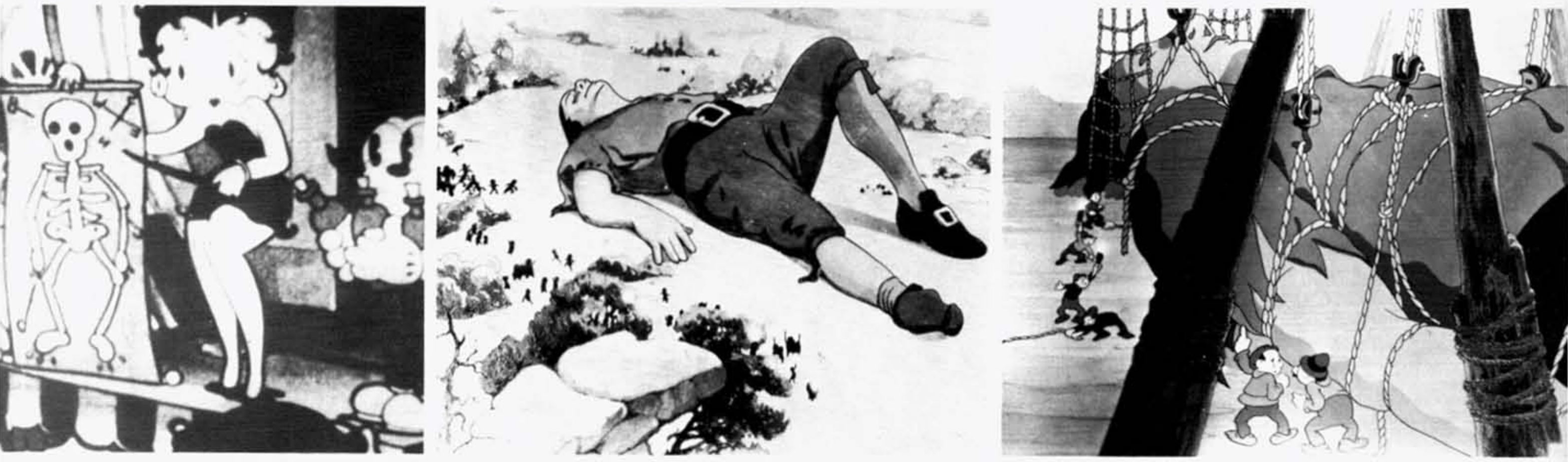
Animator Shamus Culhane, who worked for both Disney and the Fleischers, remarked that while Disney worked to perfect his art by refining character, the Fleischers perfected theirs through the elaboration of action and drawing. This would account for the kind of compact imagery and rapid action of the Fleischers' SNOW WHITE, where the musical, sexual, and morbid imagery is so dense that one experiences it almost subliminally.

As sexual as the images appear, it was not the conscious intention of the Fleischer Studio to deal with sexual themes. Animator Myron Waldman recalls their surprise when a sequence of BOILESK (1935) was censored in Philadelphia. In A LANGUAGE ALL MY OWN (1935), Japanese students were consulted to determine if any of Betty Boop's gestures in an Oriental dance might be considered obscene in Japan. This conflict between the expression and repression of sex by the Fleischer Studio might explain the link between sex and death in their films: death is the threatened punishment for sexual desire.

MAX & DAVE FLEISHER
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51

mother. The cartoon suffers further from impossibly sweet voices and a gooey choral accompaniment to the action. The Fleischers, with a few exceptions, seemed unable to deal with sentiment in an effective manner, a fault that was to harm their first sound feature.

For two years, the "Color Classics" were the only Fleischer color cartoons. In 1936, the Fleischer Studio released a two-reel special, POPEYE THE SAILOR MEETS SINDBAD THE SAILOR, possibly the most spectacular cartoon made up to that time. The film opens on Bluto, as Sindbad, who takes the audience on a musical tour of his stereoptical island, where the very stones resemble skulls and beasts. Sindbad spies Popeye, Wimpy, and Olive as they sail past his island, and orders the Roc to "Wreck that ship, but bring *me* the woman." The Roc destroys the ship, and abducts Olive, as Popeye stoically observes, "That's the biggest buzzard I ever saw." Popeye and Wimpy swim to the island, where Popeye defeats the Roc, Boola the Two-headed Monster, and finally Sindbad. The film ends as all the beasts of the island join Popeye in the same song they sang with Sindbad at the film's beginning.



Left: Betty and Bimbo sell "Jippo" to suckers in BETTY BOOP, M.D. Center and right: The Lilliputians lead Gulliver into the city, in GULLIVER'S TRAVELS.

POPEYE THE SAILOR MEETS SINDBAD THE SAILOR is refreshingly free of the sentimentalities of the "Color Classic" series. It uses the Fleischer cyclical plots but without the usual pessimism, grotesqueries, and morbid overtones of many of the earlier Popeye cartoons. The film also shows a concern for style and language that had been developed in earlier works.

Many Betty Boop and Popeye cartoons depended on the use of verbal humor for comic effect. A similar outrageous use of language occurs in SINDBAD. A sign greets visitors to the island with the message: "Enter Not. Whosoever Passeth In, Passeth Out." Later, when Popeye combats Boola, the monster swears "By Carbonate! I make from you Chicken Fricassee Assisi!" The film also includes one of the Fleischers' visual puns. During the fight between Popeye and Sindbad, Popeye is squeezed in Sindbad's grip. First, his face turns as red as a beet, and then actually turns into a beet—a new development from the usual metamorphosis.

Most importantly, SINDBAD was the first true cartoon epic, impressive in length, color, and spectacle. The low-angle shots of the dark, massive Roc, and the accompanying sound of rushing wind, give a sense of menace on a scale larger than any of the Fleischers' previous works. Although the environment of A DREAM WALKING had been as interesting in its mechanical expressionism as the set of SINDBAD was in its exotic expressionism, the gritty city streets of the Popeye series were forsaken for the exotic environments of MINNIE THE MOOCHER and SNOW WHITE.

POPEYE THE SAILOR MEETS SINDBAD THE SAILOR was instantly successful, and was often billed over its accompanying feature. It also won the studio its first Academy Award nomination for Short Subjects, but the award went to Disney for THE COUNTRY COUSIN (1936). Encouraged by success, the Fleischer Studio began work on two more Popeye specials. Before they were released, an unsettling event occurred at the Fleischer Studio in New York.

On April 20, 1937, the Commercial Artists and Designer's Union charged that Max Fleischer had refused to negotiate with the union after hearing the requests for pay increases and shorter hours. This was so. While Dave had worked fairly closely with the animators, Max preferred to work on management, development of techniques, and story ideas. He took a paternalistic attitude to his employees; to him the demands of the striking inkers, opaquers, and inbetweeners were like the demands of ungrateful children. Although salaried employees only received fifteen to twenty-seven dollars a week, this was on a par with wages at other animation studios. However, the work load was heavy, and since the Fleischers did not shoot pencil tests, there was not the margin for error that existed at Disney's or Iwerks' studios. Also, while Disney provided his staff with the latest of equipment, the Fleischers did not. As late as GULLIVER'S TRAVELS (1939), the Fleischer Studio had only one Moviola, while Disney had many.

The strike went on for many months and, although it was finally settled, the new situation did not please the Fleischers. In February of 1938, the Fleischer Studios announced plans to construct a $300,000 studio in Miami, far from the labor problems of New York. In the meantime, production continued in New York, and the Fleischers released perhaps the best of the two-reel Popeye cartoons.

POPEYE THE SAILOR MEETS ALI BABA'S FORTY THIEVES (1937), opens once more with a musical introduction by Bluto, this time as Abu Hassan, the scourge of the East, as he rides with his band through a stereoptical desert. Popeye, Wimpy, and Olive, stationed at a Coast Guard base, are ordered by radio to stop Hassan. Popeye's boat metamorphoses into an airplane, which crashes in the desert.

As day turns into night, and back again, we see Popeye, Olive, and Wimpy trudge wearily through the desert, as Popeye whimsically mutters "I wish there was a boardwalk on this beach." When Olive collapses, Popeye pushes her into the shape of a camel, and they continue on until both Olive and Wimpy collapse. Popeye transforms them into a tank tread, and in this form they rush through the desert and into a town. While the travelers refresh themselves in a cafe, Hassan and his men raid the town. When Popeye pulls Hassan off his horse, Hassan bellows "Think you're a tough guy, eh?" The embarrassed Popeye blushes and says "You can take me home for only $1.98." They fight, and Popeye is defeated. Hassan and his men leave town with Olive and Wimpy, Popeye pursues them, and cuts his way into Hassan's cave with the flame of his pipe.

The sumptuous, three-dimensional interior of the cave has no equal in any of the

Fleischers' work. Popeye proceeds apprehensively past brightly-colored heaps of jewels and gold, and finds that Olive and Wimpy have been enslaved by Hassan. Popeye pulls out his spinach, says "Open Sez-Me," and the can miraculously opens. His flexed bicep shows the form of a tank within—a typically mechanistic expression of strength. In a battle royal, he defeats Hassan and the forty theives, and returns in glory to the Arab town.

ALI BABA was a distinct improvement over the first two-reel Popeye. It replaces Sindbad's long, tedious musical introduction, with a shorter introduction of Abu Hassan that is intercut with the introduction of Popeye. ALI BABA shows much more verbal and visual wit than its predecessor. And it is enriched by a reference to some of the darker psychological themes of the earlier works. When Popeye first enters Abu Hassan's cave, he remarks: "I don't like it in here a bit!" This is reminiscent of the anxieties of Ko-Ko and Bimbo in the caves and hallways of KO-KO'S HAUNTED HOUSE, BIMBO'S INITIATION, and SNOW WHITE.

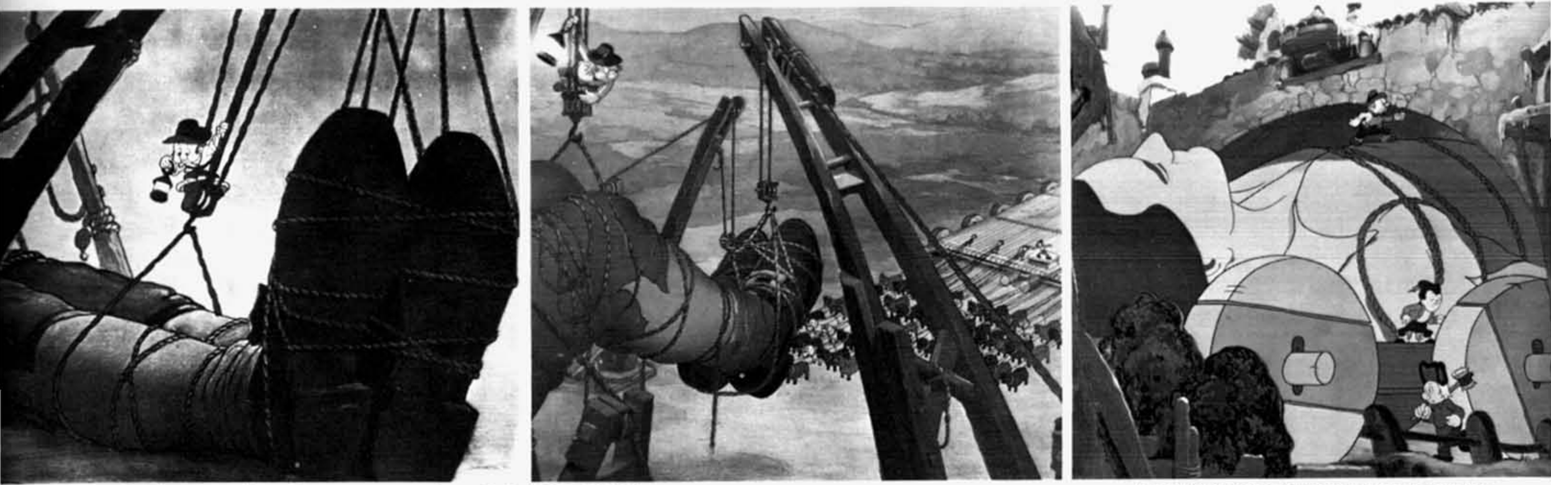
The last of the Popeye specials was not the equal of the first two. ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP (1939), a Hollywoodized version of the Aladdin story, is interesting for two reasons. First, it has a different type of self-consciousness from the silent Fleischer films. No animator appears in the Popeye cartoons, yet Popeye is aware that he is in a film. When he kisses Olive in ALADDIN, Popeye hesitates shyly and says, "Gosh, I've never done this in Technicolor before." This kind of self-consciousness had occurred in POPEYE THE SAILOR, when a newspaper proclaimed Popeye as a star. It was developed further in HOLD THE WIRE (1936), when he temporarily forgets his part. Olive has to remind him that he is supposed to take his spinach. "I never thought of that," he replies.

Popeye's self-consciousness finds greater expression in GOONLAND (1938). A climactic battle between Popeye, his father, and the hostile Goons is so fierce that the film "breaks," and all of the Goons fall off the screen. Popeye comments, "That was a lucky break!", pulls the two halves of the broken film together, and the cartoon continues. Unlike all the earlier Fleischer characters, Popeye does not need the intercession of an animator to control his fate.

As the Betty Boop character became more domesticated in the late Thirties, her popularity declined, and when Mae Questel refused to move with the studio to Miami in 1939, the series was dropped. The Popeye character continued to change as well, becoming increasingly gentle, often to the point of being foolish. In LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE (1939), Popeye frees all the animals in Olive's pet shop despite a wise parrot's advice to leave well enough alone. Popeye realizes that he is wrong when the dog catcher rounds up the hungry strays. In PUTTIN' ON THE ACT (1940), Popeye and Olive polish up their routines after reading a newspaper article on the renaissance of vaudeville. Swee'pea dampens their enthusiasm when he points out that the paper is several decades old. Popeye's senile father, in WITH POOPDECK PAPPY (1940), wants to spend his nights carousing, but Popeye worries about the old man's health. After many attempts to get Pappy to bed, Popeye finally chains him down. Popeye climbs into his own bed, turns out the light, and says "Goodnight Pappy." No answer. Popeye turns on the light, and finds that he is chained to his bed, and the old man has escaped. This was a far cry from the gruff character of POPEYE THE SAILOR.

Perhaps part of the reason that the Fleischer cartoons changed was the impact of "Disneyfication." Many of the Fleischer staff of the Forties had worked for Disney or Iwerks in the Thirties, often moving from studio to studio. A strong Disney influence can be seen in the "Color Classic" A KICK IN TIME (1940), animated by Shamus Culhane and Al Eugster after their return to the Fleischers from Iwerks and Disney. Spunky, a baby donkey, is separated from his mother Hunky—a stock Disney theme, but uncommon in the Fleischer films. He is kidnaped and sold into slavery in a scene that bears an amazing resemblance to the end of the Pleasure Island sequence in Disney's PINOCCHIO. In A KICK IN TIME, the usual stereoptical process was discarded in favor of a less effective approximation of the Disney Multiplane camera effect. Also the characters were more naturalistic than the funky originals developed by Myron Waldman. Many Fleischer characteristics remained, however, including a long passage devoted to the process of harnessing Spunky, and occasional Fleischeresque language, like "I'll be back in a flash with the trash."

In 1938, the Fleischer Studio moved to Miami, where the staff was swollen by the addition of hundreds of artists hired to work on a sound feature, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS.



Continuation of the Lilliputian montage from GULLIVER'S TRAVELS.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART/FILM STILLS ARCHIVE

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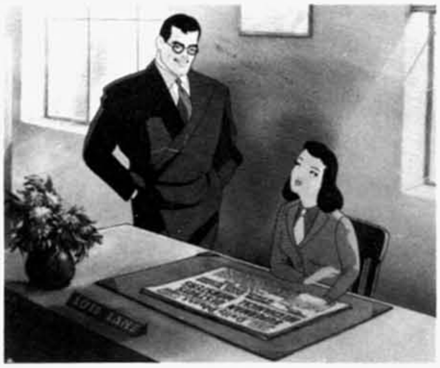
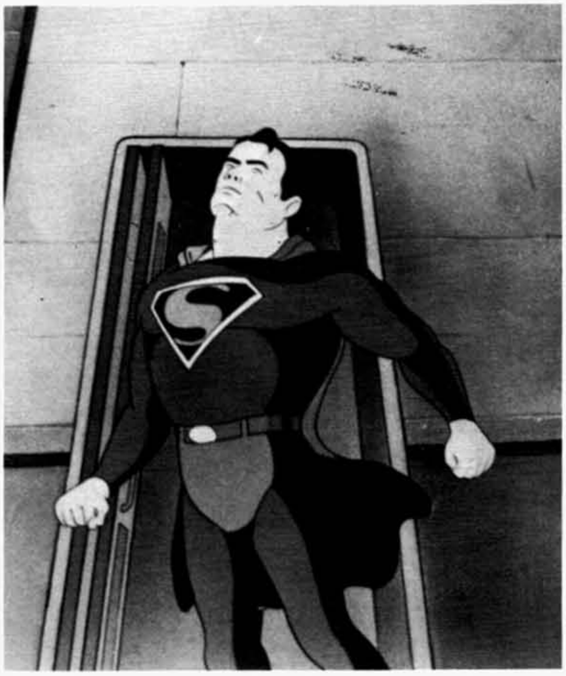
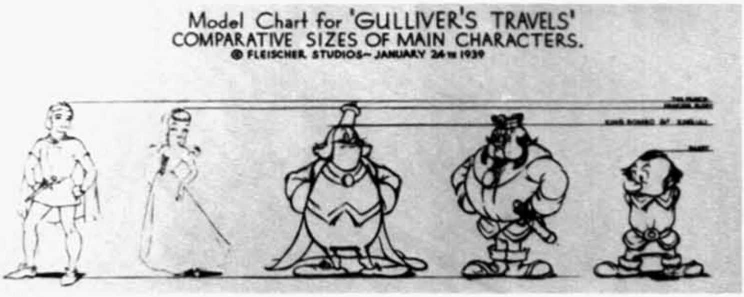
GULLIVER'S TRAVELS did well at the box office, but the Fleischers were dissatisfied. Paramount, eager to duplicate the popularity of SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS, had forced the Fleischers to rush their film through production. Max and Dave felt that the film suffered, and indeed it had many problems. It lacked stylistic unity. Gulliver, Prince David, and Princess Glory were heavily rotoscoped, but the other characters were drawn in the free style of the Popeye cartoons. The contrast often made the rotoscoped characters look awkwardly lifelike, and the others crudely drawn.






Model Chart for 'GULLIVER'S TRAVELS'
COMPARATIVE SIZES OF MAIN CHARACTERS.
© FLEISCHER STUDIOS—JANUARY 24th 1939

Left and right: Clark Kent and his alter-ego, Superman. Below: In the model chart, note discrepancy between cartoon and rotoscoped characters.

The script suffered from an apparent inability of the Fleischer Studio to make the hero or romantic leads interesting. The observer does not care whether the lovers are united, and one suspects that the Fleischers did not care either. More attention was given to the subsidiary comic characters, particularly King Little. Like the Popeye of the later cartoons, Little is reluctant to fight, but is on the winning side, and has Popeye's benevolent, slightly foolish quality. Bombo resembles Bluto in physique and temperament. In contrast, Princess Glory and Prince David are the antithesis of Betty and Bimbo or Popeye and Olive, replacing the former lower class comic-sexual relationships with a blandly "classy," sexless, over-romanticized one.

Many of the backgrounds of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS recall—not always to their credit—the backgrounds of earlier Fleischer films. The interior of King Little's palace shows the same kind of detailed chiaroscuro as the backgrounds of MINNIE THE MOOCHER or SNOW WHITE, but without the menacing imagery. Perhaps the best sequences in the film deal with mechanical processes. The binding of Gulliver begins with a bit of comic foreshadowing. As the tiny figures advance on the sleeping giant, they tie down a particularly noisy member of their party. Then, by the light of the moon, they tie cables around Gulliver, construct cranes, and lift him onto a cart. Hundreds of cartoon horses are shown in heroic angles as they strain under the weight of Gulliver. Similar attention is given to the grooming of Gulliver with scythes and rakes. Unfortunately, more detail is given to these physical properties of Gulliver the giant, than to the personal qualities of Gulliver the man.

Some of the darker themes in the Fleischers' earlier work are repeated in GULLIVER'S TRAVELS. Gulliver's pistol is taken from him when he is bound, in symbolic castration. He does not have the power to return home until the gun is returned to him. Furthermore, Prince David does not marry Princess Glory until he takes this pistol away from his father's agents.

The Forties found the Fleischers without a replacement for the defunct Betty Boop series. The donkeys Hunky and Spunky, had a limited success, but a proto-Flintstones series of "Stone Age" cartoons proved very unpopular. In one form or another, every comic character of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS was tried out in a "Gabby Color Cartoon" or an "Animated Antics," but none was successful. Expenses were high at the studio, with a staff of hundreds, and this was aggravated when Paramount obtained the rights to animate Superman, the popular *Action Comics* character, in hopes of repeating Popeye's success, despite Dave Fleischer's protests that production costs would make any profit impossible.

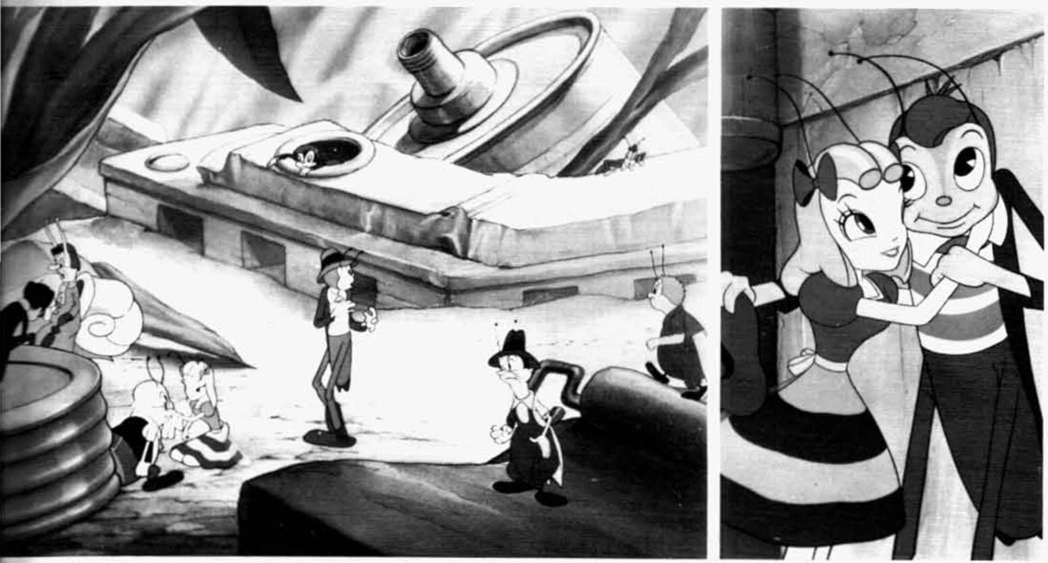
SUPERMAN (1941) revealed some stylistic difficulties that the Popeye cartoons did not have. Segar's style of drawing had more in common with the Fleischer style of the early Thirties than the drawings of Superman cartoonist Joe Shuster had in the early Forties. As a result, SUPERMAN was an unhappy amalgam of different styles, combining Shuster's more naturalistic artwork for the heroes, with the Fleischers' more grotesque style for the villain.

The "Superman Color Cartoons" were well received, but were too expensive to yield any significant profits. The Fleischers desperately needed to have a hit with their next feature, MR. BUG GOES TO TOWN (1941). The advance publicity for the film had an ominous ring to it. Not since the final days of Red Seal Pictures had the studio been so press-conscious. Weird publicity stunts were tried, such as an $185,000 insurance policy with Lloyds of London on the hands of the head animators. Even hangnails were to be covered.

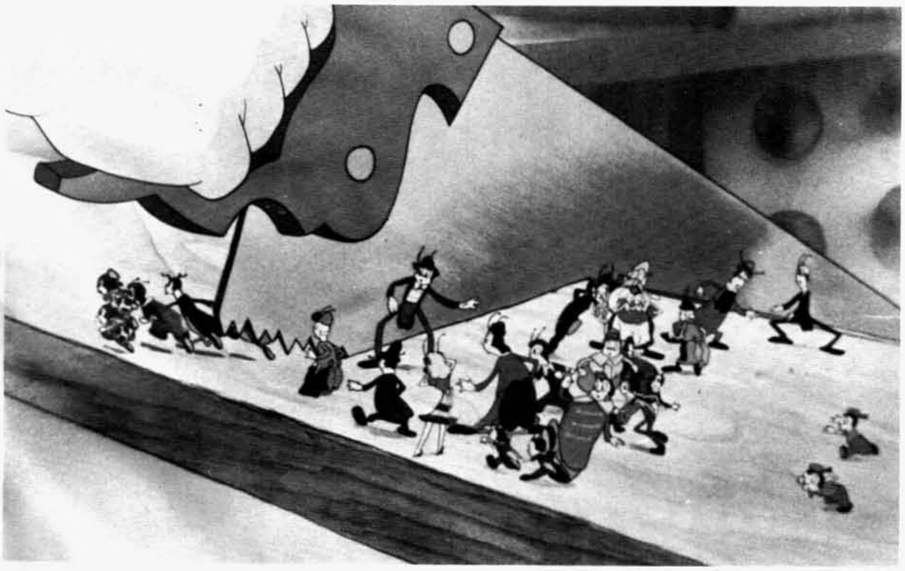
MR. BUG GOES TO TOWN was billed as the first feature cartoon with an original story, although Dave Fleischer admits that he was influenced by Maeterlinck's *Life of a Bee*. The film opens with lyrical tracking shots through the sky, down past the buildings of a stereoptical New York, to a park, where a man discards a lit match. The camera follows the match down to the world of the insects, finishing a poetic transition from the cosmic to the microcosmic. MR. BUG tells the story of a young grasshopper named Hoppity, his wooing of the lovely Honey Bee, and his search for a safe home for the entire insect community whose existence is threatened by the construction of a skyscraper. The insects' hopes become linked with the hopes of struggling songwriter Dick Dickens, who plans to rebuild his home where the skyscraper is to be built, if his song is sold. The evil C. Bagley Beetle, however, has designs on Honey, and tries to thwart everyone's plans to achieve his own nefarious ends. Beetle's attempt to hide Dickens' check fails, and although the skyscraper is built, Hoppity, Honey, and the other insects find a home in Dickens' penthouse apartment garden.

The connection between MR. BUG and Frank Capra's films go beyond the similarity of the titles. In physique, sincerity, and a faith in the future, Hoppity resembles Capra's arch-heroes, James Stewart and Gary Cooper. Mr. Beetle is the dark force that threatens the well being of the community, much like Edward Arnold in MEET JOHN DOE and MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON. Hoppity experiences the moment of disillusionment and despair that strikes Capra's heroes, but regains his faith and that of his fellow citizens at the end of the film.

Nevertheless, the film does show a number of typical Fleischer features. The preoccupation with construction echoes GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, as the process of building the insect wedding chapel and the skyscraper show. Rotoscoping and conventionally animated figures are used more successfully than in the earlier feature. Instead of producing a disunity of style, here the two styles illustrate a barrier between the rotoscoped human world and the insect world. This is similar to Disney's use of rotoscoping in DUMBO, where the circus laborers are rotoscoped, but the animals are not, defining two different, but related worlds. This separation between animal and human was a fairly late development in the Fleischers' work. In early Betty Boop and Popeye cartoons, the two mingled on an equal basis. The Jitterbug sequence where Hoppity gets electrified is an abstract interlude similar to DUMBO's Pink Elephants On Parade sequence in its use of music and image.



MR. BUG GOES TO TOWN. Above left: the insect world.
Above right: Hoppity and Honey Bee embrace.
Below: The human and insect worlds interact in the construction locale.



Perhaps the greatest weakness of both the Fleischer features is that they do not deal with the great fantasies and fears of childhood, as did the Disney films. Instead they concentrate on adult anxieties—fear of death, sexual fears, and fears of change—that could not effect children. Also, the studio suffered from a rift between Max and Dave Fleischer.

Since 1937, when they clashed in a personal matter,the brothers had refused to talk to one another. Apparently, they were able to function in this manner. Dave directed the films, and Max handled technical and administrative matters. Early in 1942, Dave resigned, although he retained his share of the company, and within the year he was producing "Color Phantasies" and "Color Rhapsodies" for Columbia, some of which were remakes of earlier Fleischer cartoons.

In the meantime, the returns on MR. BUG were not as good as had been hoped. Due to the war, the European and Japanese markets, which had made up a great part of the Fleischer audience, were cut off. It also seems as if Paramount wanted the Fleischer Studio to founder: the Paramount publicity office had actually sent advisors to Disney's studio to help prepare publicity for BAMBI.

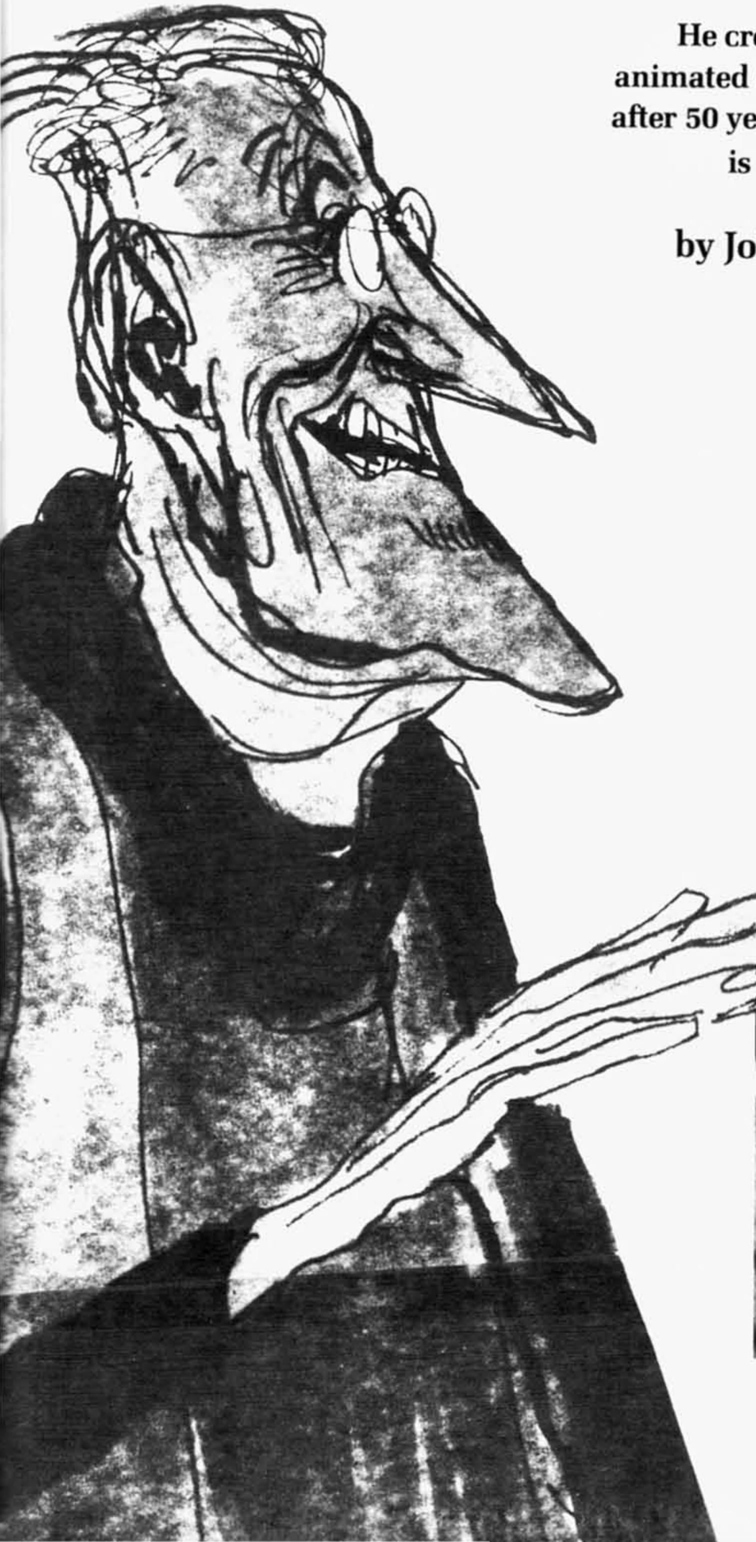
Max was now so deeply in debt that he was forced to sell the company to Paramount. In mid-1942, the studio was renamed the Famous Studio, with Fleischer employees Seymour Kneitel and Isadore Sparber as studio heads. The staff was pared drastically, and the studio returned to New York, where it was to produce cartoons that continued to decline in quality.

After losing the studio, Max developed a gunsight recording mechanism for the army. He worked for the Jam Handy Organization, a Detroit concern that produced advertising films and educational filmstrips, and then returned to the Bray Studio. In the Fifties, he was involved in a short-lived "Ko-Ko" cartoon series for television. Dave remained at Columbia for several years, and then joined Universal as a special effects man, where, he recalls, he painted cracks on someone's glasses for THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE. Max Fleischer died on November 12, 1972. Dave lives in semi-retirement in Hollywood, California. The brothers never did speak to each other again. ⁂

Grim Natwick

He created Betty Boop, animated Snow White, and after 50 years of cartooning is still going strong.

by John Canemaker

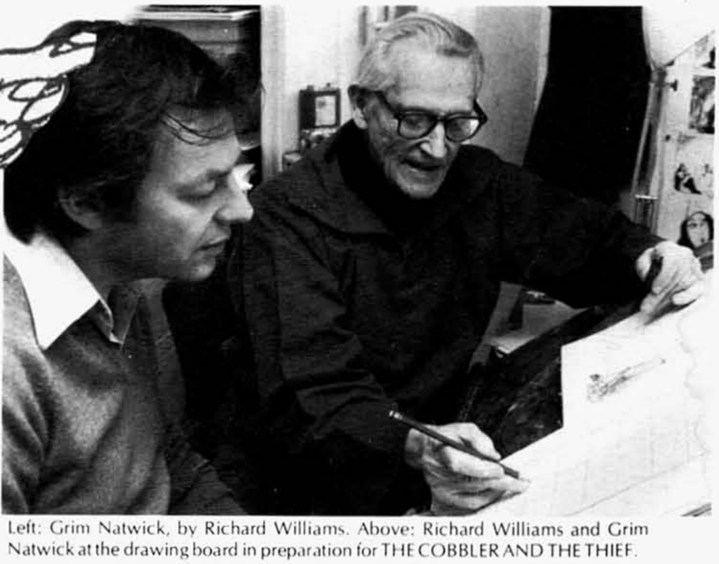


The great Grim Natwick was in town. The animator who created Betty Boop for Max and Dave Fleischer, and who was responsible for animating eighty-four scenes in Disney's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (mostly of the young princess herself), was in New York completing the last leg of a cross-country journey visiting friends and relatives. "I've been drawing Betty Boops and Mickey Mouses and Sinclair dinosaurs and all the various things we used to animate, for the nieces and nephews as I come across the country. And you'd be surprised at what they bring you to draw with and on!"

Grim Natwick is considered by his peers to be perhaps the finest animator of the female form and character. Certainly he is a pioneer in this special area; for besides his masterly work on the Misses Boop and White, Natwick brought to life Princess Glory in Max and Dave Fleischer's GULLIVER'S TRAVELS; Nelly Bly, the champagne-glass-shaped sexpot in U.P.A.'s ROOTY-TOOT-TOOT (1952) directed by John Hubley; and most recently, the Mad Holy Old Witch in Richard Williams' long-awaited feature cartoon, THE COBBLER AND THE THIEF. Natwick claims this will be his final animation in a career of brilliant versatility which has allowed him to master at one time or another such diverse characters as Mr. Magoo, Popeye, Woody Woodpecker, and Mickey Mouse.

Grim Natwick was born in the lumber region of Wisconsin. "I never give my age. If they know I worked on Betty Boop they can make their own guesses. I guess you can call me a veteran, an antique, or one of the pioneers."

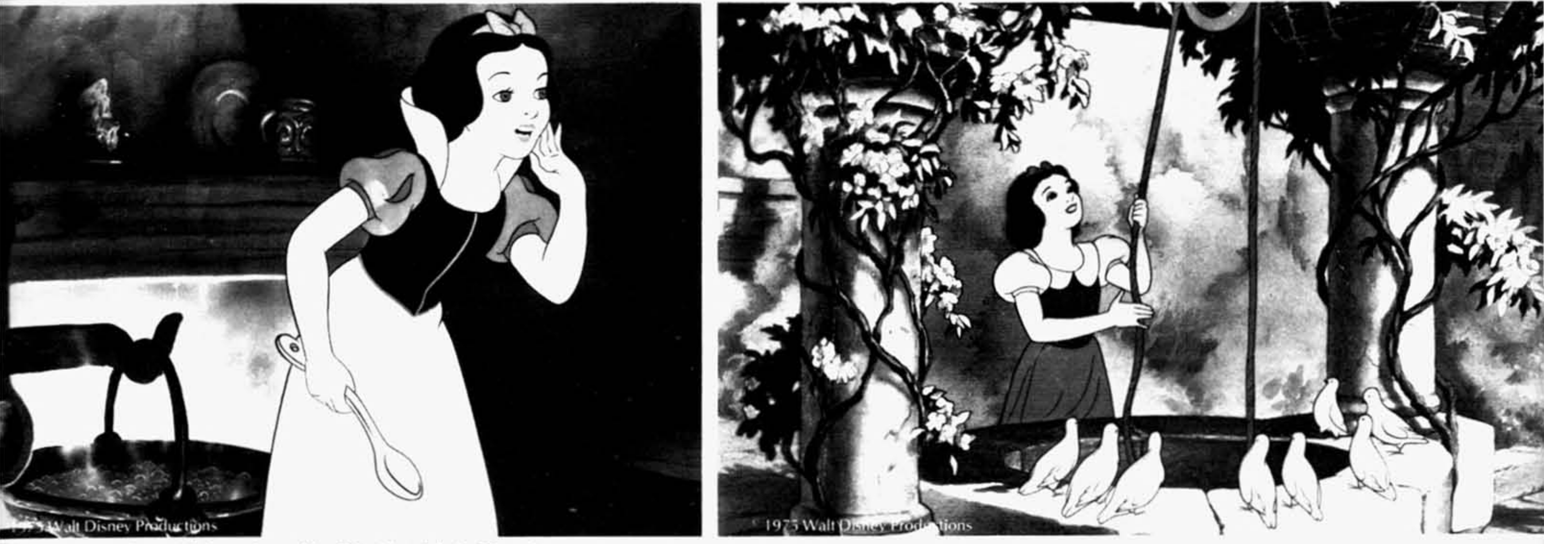
In high school, Natwick was a track star: "I was never a great sprinter, but I knew the form of running the hurdles, and form



Left: Grim Natwick, by Richard Williams. Above: Richard Williams and Grim Natwick at the drawing board in preparation for THE COBBLER AND THE THIEF.

in animation is just as important. I notice that, among animators, there are either former athletes or athletic devotees. There's a physical feeling in animation. When I animate a scene I feel it perfectly. When I make one drawing I know exactly how that figure feels. I know exactly how it feels to stretch that leg forward and then I know how those 'inbetweens' are going to feel."

Natwick's interest and talent in art took him first to the Chicago Art Institute, then to the National Academy of Design in New York. He designed hundreds of song sheets before a former art school buddy convinced him to try animation at the William Randolph Hearst Studio. The studio, which animated Hearst newspaper comic heroes (Silk-Hat Harry, Judge Rummy, etc.), was under the direction of young Gregory La Cava.



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Snow White, animated by Grim Natwick, in Disney's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS.

In those early days, the aids taken for granted today in film animation—soundtracks, storyboards, "inbetweeners" (the head animator's apprentice-assistants)—did not exist. Even a proper Story Department was yet to be developed; at the Hearst Studio, La Cava would deliver a brief typewritten copy of a plot with suggested scene numbers to the animators, who were then responsible for coming up with gags getting the character into and out of trouble. Final drawings were inked on paper, since the "cel" method was not yet in wide use. Each animator turned out one four-hundred-foot picture a month: "When we started out we always made one hundred drawings before we went to lunch. This is 'straight-ahead' animation. We didn't even have inbetweens." New York animators were trained to animate "straight-ahead" from point *A* of an action through point Z. When sound arrived, the "key pose" method—drawing the extreme poses of actions first and then filling in the inbetween drawings—proved more efficient for animating music and sound effects.

In 1925, after one year at Hearst, Natwick took his savings and sailed for Vienna to study art. "It was one of the most valuable decisions of my life." At the Vienna National Academy Natwick sharpened his draftsmanship and developed the skill in rendering the female form that was to become his forte in animation. Egon Schiele ("his feel") and Gustav Klimt were strong stylistic influences on young Natwick. During this period, he felt his drawing "bounded ahead" and he did not intend to return to animation.

After three years of intense study, Natwick received his certificate and, in the late summer of 1928, returned to New York. Some startling changes had occurred in America's entertainment scene since his departure. Radio had become very popular and motion pictures with sound were all the rage, a fact that influenced the animation business profoundly. Disney's song-and-sound-effects cartoons had animation producers frenetically trying to compete not only with Disney's expertise and style, but with each other for sound equipment that had to be either invented or adapted. Most importantly, they competed for new ideas and talent.

Animators were in great demand. Natwick joined pioneer Bill Nolan in animating "Krazy Kat," and within a year was working on "Song Car-Tunes" at Max and Dave Fleischer's busy studio. "Nobody knew how to read a music sheet then. We didn't know what a musical beat was. There were a couple of animators who knew music or played an instrument, and gradually, with metronomes and things, we worked out a fool-proof system that is still used. What I had them do in the cutting room was simply take a loop of film and put a piece of Scotch tape every few frames so it said 'click' each time it went through. So we started with a four, then an eight, a twelve, an eighteen, and a twenty, and we'd keep running this and set the metronome to match it. I'll bet half of those old pictures never did harmonize with the music, but we'd hit it often enough, so it was pretty good.

"They were grabbing an awful lot of records of the time and were animating what they called 'song cartoons' and had developed quite a few little characters, like Ko-ko the Clown and Bimbo. One morning they put on my desk a copy of the 'Boop-Boop-A-Doop' song sung by Helen Kane. At that time there were no designers and no storymen. We virtually wrote our own stories and designed our own characters, then animated them, and so it was with Betty. I'm not even sure she was okayed before I animated her.

"Helen Kane, like so many girls of the time, wore spit curls, so I started with that and designed a little character who was supposed to work with Bimbo the dog. She started out as a little dog with long ears, but the rest of her was extremely feminine and she did a rather swinging dance in the first picture which no dog could have done, so after a few pictures the long ears developed into earrings and she was nothing but a cute little girl. Betty Boop was an instantaneous hit, probably because she was the first real feminine character, and introduced new sensitivity to cartoons."

Betty Boop emerged as a star from the Fleischers' "Talkatoons" series made in 1930 for Paramount Pictures. As Betty's popularity grew, Paramount contract players, among them Cab Calloway, Rudy Vallee, The Mills Brothers, Don Redman, Maurice Chevalier, and Ethel Merman, made live or voice-over guest appearances in her films. She was given tailor-made stories and special songs by Sammy Timberg and Sam Lerner, and eventually became sexy enough to be banned by Hollywood censors as "lewd." The Fleischers were sued by Helen Kane who claimed Betty was stealing her trademark, but Miss Kane lost the ensuing court case when it was revealed that she had picked up the "Boop-Boop-A-Doop" from a lesser-known black singer, Baby Esther.

Natwick animated the first six of about one hundred Betty Boop cartoons. Some of the "pure cartoonists" who had to draw and animate her following Natwick, and who did not have the academic art background he had acquired in Vienna, found her troublesome. "I had gone to life classes for three years over there, plus previous art education here, and most of the men in animation then—almost all of them—were just cartoonists. They didn't pretend to draw anything that had any serious manner. I guess I was probably the first person to animate a female character and really try to develop the feminine qualities. The early animation was simply trying to make something funny, and if anything popped into your head to make it funny, you did it."

It was a scene of Betty Boop climbing up a rapidly moving locomotive engine that caught the talent-searching eye of Walt Disney. Natwick had animated the scene with detailed touches unusual for that period in animation, such as her hair and dress being whipped about her by the wind. (Natwick calls it "the first serious animation I ever did.") Natwick was soon visited in New York by Roy Disney, Walt's brother and business partner. "Roy came out and took me to dinner every night for about a week. It was a glorious time to be an animator. We were offered usually two jobs a month, but we respected contracts. But I accepted the Iwerks shop [in California] because at that time the rumor in the East was that the genius of the [Disney Studio] was Iwerks. I'm awfully glad I did."

Ub Iwerks was Walt Disney's former partner and the designer of Mickey Mouse. He was the sole animator on the first five Mickey Mouse shorts and the designer and animator of the earliest "Silly Symphonies." Iwerks has been described by Christopher Finch as being "...next to Walt Disney himself...the most important single figure in the development of the [Disney] Studio." In 1930, however, Iwerks quit the Disney operation and set up his own studio. Natwick recalls: "Iwerks did everything well. He could draw like a fiend. He'd make a few drawings then run down to the basement to work on his multiplane camera. We had a multiplane camera before Disney did." But Iwerks was not the business genius Disney was, and he didn't have Disney's talent for story editing, nor his dramatic sense.

Iwerks created a character called Flip the Frog that proved unpopular. "If you picked him apart," says Natwick of Flip, "he was designed very much like Mickey Mouse except he had a blunt nose and he wore a funny hat. Otherwise they were almost the same characters, which helped me because after drawing Flip for a while, when I finally did go to Disney's, Mickey came very easy." After almost three years working at the Iwerks Studio, Natwick decided to make overtures to the Disney organization. "Someone told me that if you ever turned Walt down he'd never hire you." But Ted Sears intervened on Natwick's behalf and in early 1934 Natwick joined the Disney Studio.

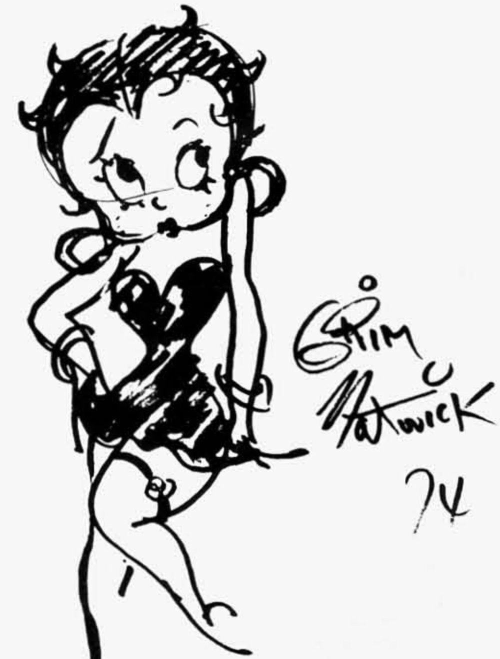
At that time Walt Disney had already started preliminary work on SNOW WHITE, and was enlarging his production staff of artists, animators, writers, musicians, and technicians to an eventual total of almost seven hundred employees by late 1937 when the film was completed. The Mickey Mouse shorts and Silly Symphonies were in full production and Natwick at first worked on several of these films: MICKEY'S FIRE BRIGADE (1935), MUSICLAND (1935), COOKIE CARNIVAL (1935), ALPINE CLIMBERS (1936), MICKEY'S POLO GAME (1936), MOTHER GOOSE GOES HOLLYWOOD (1938).

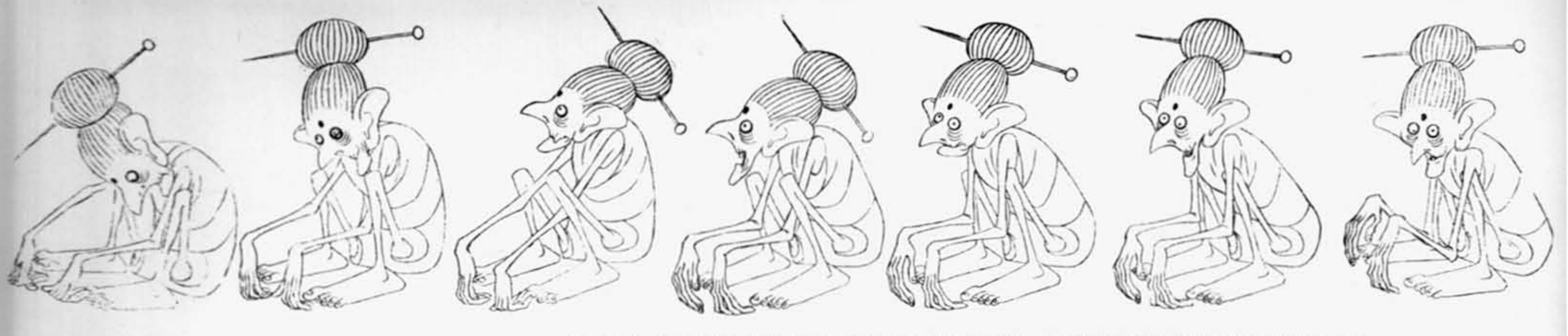
Art classes, under the direction of Don Graham, had been started by Disney in 1932 to prepare his artists for complex future projects. "I went to the night classes and there was a life class there all the time, and of course, there were certain talks by Rico LeBrun, Jean Charlot, and that great pianist and musician, the tall, skinny guy who composed the music for SNOW WHITE, Frank Churchill. He told us how to interpret a certain type of music from a musician's point of view. I remember once I had a grasshopper—this was in the POLO picture—who played his violin. Frank very politely and casually said, 'Don't you think it would work better if the bow were going in the opposite direction?' Violinists get certain notes by bowing up and certain notes by bowing down. I didn't know that. So it did work better.

"They gave you all sorts of help that no other studio in the world could ever give you. You had a hundred very talented artists there at that time, like [Gustave] Tenggren. With THE OLD MILL [1937], I guess he spent a year on that making sketches. Albert Hurter had a big room and a big desk and did exactly what he pleased. Walt would say, 'Well, we're going to make an animal picture, it'll be located so and so. See if you can think of funny little positions.' And Albert would play around with it. The Disney Story Department had superb artists. They were all good cartoonists, fellows like Webb Smith, Ted Sears.

And after these guys came up with a funny idea, they turned it over to that big, muscular professional football player who was always bumping in and out, Roy Williams. He would turn out eight or ten gags. For instance, if you had to turn on a faucet, they'd say, 'Well, this scene is dead. Hand it to Roy and see if he can think of something.' So he'd have the old character come in and turn on the water faucet and maybe mice would come out! Everything except water."

Walt Disney was the first cartoon producer to utilize his various animators' individual talents by allowing them to specialize. Some animators specialized in heavies (Bill Tytla's Stromboli from PINOCCHIO, and the devil in FANTASIA'S Bald Mountain sequence), while other men found comic characters more to their liking (Norm Ferguson, Bill Roberts, and Shamus Culhane became Pluto experts). Disney, of course, was well-aware of Natwick's expertise in animating the female form, so Natwick attended many of the early meetings regarding Snow White's design and personality concept. "They didn't want her to look like a princess, really. They wanted her to look like a cute little girl who could be a princess. So instead of a little crown, it ended with a little bow; and with the hair we did many things. They allowed me two months of experimental animation before they ever asked me to animate one scene in the picture. I might even take a scene we knew would be there, that had this song in it, and play around with it and see how the test looked. Then we'd say, 'Well, we're having trouble with the sleeves or something. Can they be simplified?' We would bring up any question with the designers. I had a lot to do with the designing of it because I would try things myself. But Snow White was a sweet and graceful little girl and we just tried not to clown her up. Betty Boop gets quite wild at times, you know, but it's in her character. See, about ten different artists worked on that character and they kept sending up models to us. You





Mad Holy Old Witch of the Desert Mountain for Richard Williams' THE COBBLER AND THE THIEF.

GRIM NATWICK CONTINUED

see the different models in that book [*The Art of Walt Disney*]."

Disney hired eighteen-year-old Marjorie Belcher (later Marge Champion) as a model to aid the animators in capturing Snow White's expressions, movement, and poses. Miss Belcher would dance and act scenes from the script for a live-action camera (see *Life* magazine, 4 April 1938, pp. 18-19) as part of a technique known as "rotoscoping." Natwick explains how this aid was used: "They would take a film of this girl acting out something. Then they would put a bunch of beginning artists in a dark room where they could run the film over so it reflected against the animation board exactly with pegs and everything the same as we used it. And then they would trace, rather hurriedly sometimes, every second [frame]. In a photograph you'd lose half; they'd trace as much as they could see, and give us the action as nearly as they could see it. Then these drawings were photostatted and given to us. We would put those on our board and then recreate, you know, this character, this Snow White.

"For instance, her chin would come about here, then we had to cut off her shoulders and start from the bottom. You kept a short blouse so that if you keep the legs long enough, she did dancing and walking and things. The Snow White we drew was usually only five or six heads high. We had to reconstruct the character over [the model drawings]. Very often about all we could use might be the leg action and then we could exaggerate that if we wanted to. And very often some of our best animation we could do without the rotoscope. The best animation, generally, that I think I ever did—and that's what [Dick] Williams thought and that's why he wanted me to come to London—was where she runs down the stairs. It was too risky a thing to rotoscope so I had to animate that and it turned out to be one of the nicest...I think we could have animated a lot of that probably. But we didn't know. Nobody had ever done a character like this. It was a new problem for all of us."

Many of the older Disney artists still at the Studio today consider Snow White the most successful female animation ever done there; so much so that, in the 1973 feature cartoon ROBIN HOOD, the animation of the fox Maid Marian dancing at a forest party is the same used to make Snow White dance at the dwarfs' party thirty-six years before. To some, Snow White seems "younger" in contrast to the Disney heroines Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. Natwick responded: "I guess so. We were younger, too. Maybe that had something to do with it. The problem was too new. We were too young to know what the hell we were doing. I don't know how we did it. I don't think anyone does really."

During his twenty months' concentration on SNOW WHITE, Natwick completed eighty-four scenes (or a tenth of the footage), many of them major components of the story. He was assisted at times by five younger animators who "cleaned-up" his basic rough "pose" drawings, and followed his instructions in the preparation of inbetween drawings to smooth out the action's flow. Near the picture's deadline came a rush order for completion and Natwick pushed out thirty-five feet of film, or about a thousand drawings a week.

While Natwick was on vacation after working on some animation in the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" sequence from FANTASIA and some layout for PINOCCHIO, his car slid up a wet embankment and fell over, tearing his right arm ("my drawing arm") out of the socket. "While I was in a plaster cast I visited New York and the Fleischer Studio. They were building the new studio down in Florida and they wanted me to come down there, much to my surprise. So I thought, well, I've been at Disney's four years. Why not? I always enjoyed working with Fleischer and I knew them very well.

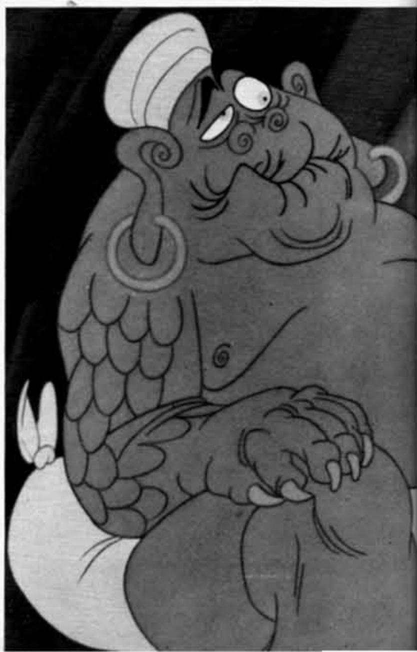
"I never had any gripe with Disney's. It was a great place to work, terrific experience, and, I believe, the greatest college of animation in the world. Disney had only one rule: whatever we did had to be better than anybody else could do it, even if you had to animate it nine times, as I once did. The animation is still gorgeous, but now they've lost their storymen—the former newspaper cartoonists and comic-strip men."

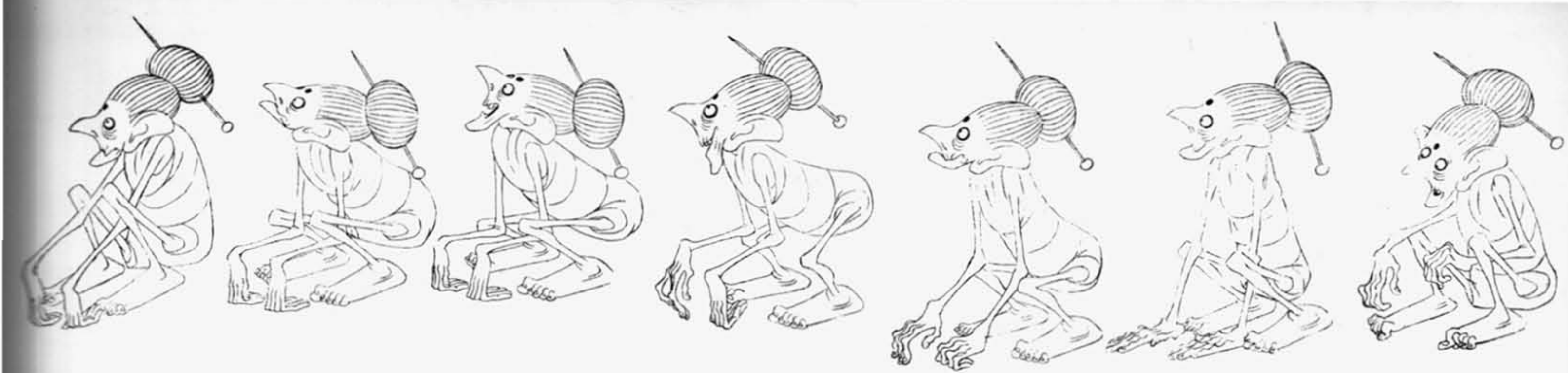
The new Fleischer Studio in Miami was the second largest unit for the production of animated cartoons in the country. The $1,250,000 complex occupied an entire city block and employed about seven hundred people producing thirty cartoons a year for Paramount release. On GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, Fleischer's first feature cartoon, Natwick was Sequence Director of one thousand feet of film and animated the third great female character of his career:

ADVICE FROM A MASTER:

"The only advice for anyone who wants to animate is to draw every second they can, and work with a good animator." Natwick casts a cold eye on a certain group of West Coast TV animation factories claiming they "are doing nothing to improve animation. They're just trying to make a quick buck so that they can make another quick buck, and it's a shame. I have ideas on what can be done. I don't think animation has even been tried yet. Animation can stand ten years of experimentation, particularly in a feature picture."

Natwick's natural gift for "teaching without teaching" demonstrates itself in several casually mentioned tips on animation technique which are the result of years spent mastering his craft: "We used to bet $10 to a dime that you could take any character and walk it across the room and get a laugh out of it. And it still can be done by the animator. We used to have about twenty-four different walks. We would have a certain motion on the body, a certain motion on the head, a certain kind of patter walk, a big step, or the 'Goofy-walk' that Art Babbitt developed. We made a study of walks and dances. While the opposite arm naturally moves with the opposite leg, we would break those rules eight or ten different ways to make the walk interesting. Lots of silly little commercial cartoons have been saved because there was a





GRIM NATWICK ON ANIMATION

funny walk in there.

"The editing of a picture an animator has to learn, too. An animator should spend days experimenting to learn how to move [camera] fields. Never waste a drawing, but always get everything out of a drawing that you can.

"If we wanted to know how to do something [at Disney's], we'd go to the greatest guy in the world who could do it. I learned how to deliver a punch from Art Babbitt. He said, 'Don't ever show the hand hitting the chin; show the hand after it's past the chin and the chin has moved out of place and there's lots of stars where the contact was.'

"There's a vocabulary of two thousand things—just as if they were two thousand separate words—that you have to learn about animation. If you've got that vocabulary, you're a great animator. If you have two hundred of them, you could get by today. A lot of animators are getting by with a very small vocabulary. What do you know about animation today and what will you know ten years from now? You'll find that in ten years you'll be able to do in one hour what you take a day to do now. That's because you keep piling knowledge upon knowledge till pretty soon you have five hundred words in that vocabulary that will make it a lot easier."

the Princess Glory. He deep-sea fished and worked on some Popeye shorts after GULLIVER. Money and film were becoming scarce due to the War, and all studios without government contracts for training films—necessary to keep revenue flowing as the European market shrank—were in trouble. Natwick returned to California and worked with Walter Lantz on two hundred Army Educational films and Woody Woodpecker shorts. He spent a year animating in an aircraft plant while illustrating comic books on the side. After the War, he joined U.P.A.

U.P.A. (United Productions of America) was formed by a small group of former Disney artists, among them Stephen Bosustow, Bill Hurtz, Pete Burness, John Hubley, and Bob Cannon, who sought to produce cartoons more freely and in a wider variety of individual styles than was allowed at the Disney Studio. Ultimately, U.P.A.'s diversification and encouragement of different work opened the doors to a general change in approach to cartoon style and content not only in America but around the world. Their movement away from realistic, natural settings, and characters, and toward sharper, more sophisticated, even cynical, abstractions of realism, returned animation to its basic magic of making the impossible plausible.

Grim Natwick worked on many U.P.A. classic shorts, including TROUBLE INDEMNITY (1950: the second Mr. Magoo cartoon), WILLIE THE KID (1952), GERALD MCBOING BOING (1950), and ROOTY TOOT-TOOT (1952). He was Supervising Animator on countless TV commercials at U.P. A.'s New York office, and when that branch closed in May 1958, he free-lanced successfully with Tissa David for ten years.

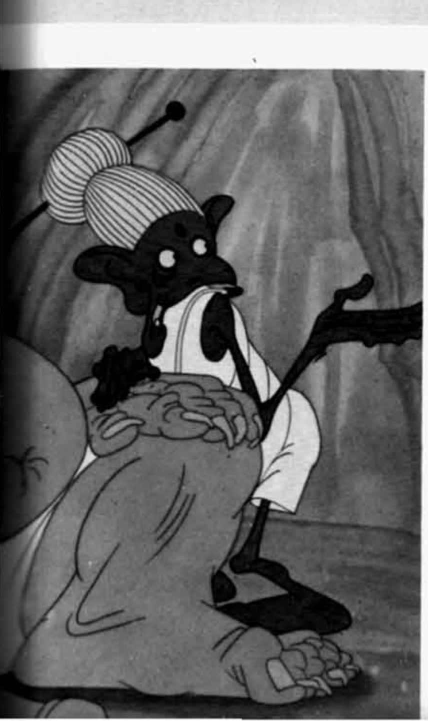
Tissa David is one of the few women animators to have made it to the top of her profession. Her animation is much in demand by TV commercial, industrial, and educational film producers. Most recently she was sole animator of John Hubley's award-winning COCKABOODY (1973). "I learned animation from Grim Natwick. I think he is the greatest animator that ever lived and he is the greatest teacher of animation. Not only does he have that knowledge, but he has a way to give it away. Even today I don't do one line without something in my brain that Grim told me. I came to New York in 1955 [after working as an animator in Paris and Budapest]. At that time U.P.A. was the big name in animation in Europe. I had no sample reel. I went in once to make a sort of try-out. I was scared; I didn't speak English. I didn't know what they were talking about. So I was just waiting, waiting, and Grim came by. U.P.A. had an awful lot of work and they needed an assistant to him, so they told him I needed the work. And so I worked with Grim for twelve years.

"First we worked at U.P.A. as a team, then when U.P.A. closed down we went over to Bob Lawrence. Then we free-lanced. We always free-lanced as a team. We picked up a job, then more and more it happened he did half of animation, I did half of animation, and I 'cleaned up' the whole thing so it looked like one. We did several pieces of animation for John [Hubley] and this is how John knew me. I saw SNOW WHITE in 1938 and I thought, 'Now this is something I want to do.' Isn't it strange that SNOW WHITE got me into animation and I really learned my animation from Grim."

In 1968, Natwick retired from animation in order to pursue oil painting. "I spent my whole life drawing and I went to Vienna with the idea of being a serious painter. In order to earn a living I had to get into animation, so I spent most of my life there. But I decided to quit and wanted to do some painting, and I've spent the better part of about five years trying to reach that point."

In 1973 Natwick was coaxed out of retirement by an invitation to lecture on his approach to the art of animation to younger animators at Dick Williams' London studio. The agreed-upon two months stretched into eight months because he "got so intrigued with that witch"—the fascinating old crone in Williams' feature THE COBBLER AND THE THIEF.

Film animation celebrates its diamond anniversary this year; this date is based on the existence of a paper print of an animated cartoon in the Library of Congress by an unknown artist working for the Edison Company in 1900. Grim Natwick is yet another of the many individual artists who have toiled anonymously under corporate banners and are only now receiving long-overdue public recognition of their special contributions. Grim Natwick has always had total command of the animation "vocabulary" he refers to; he has spoken it fluently and with eloquence throughout a long and distinguished career advancing the new art of film animation. ⁂

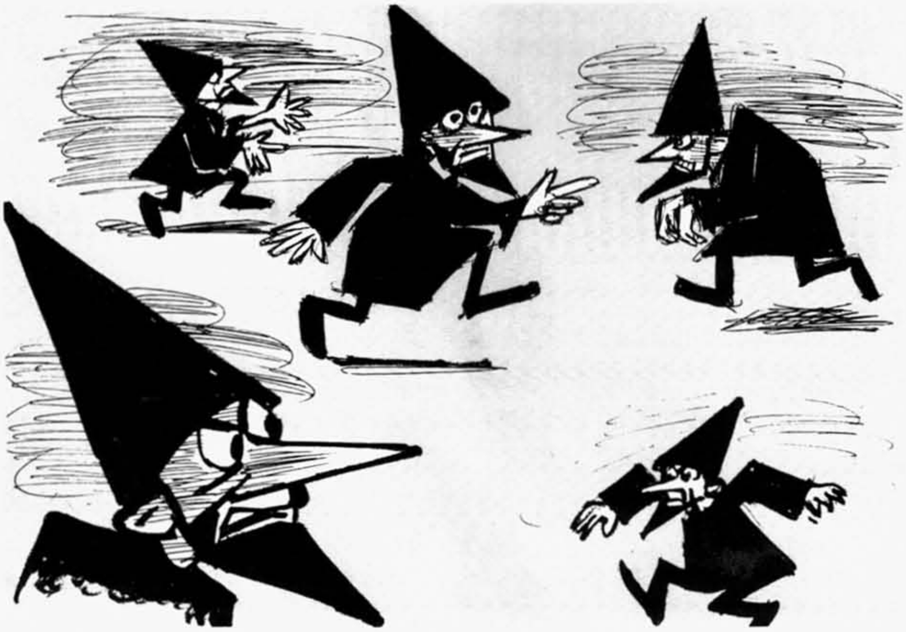


THE COBBLER AND THE THIEF: The Mad Holy Old Witch examines the Enchanted Prince before beginning her magic.

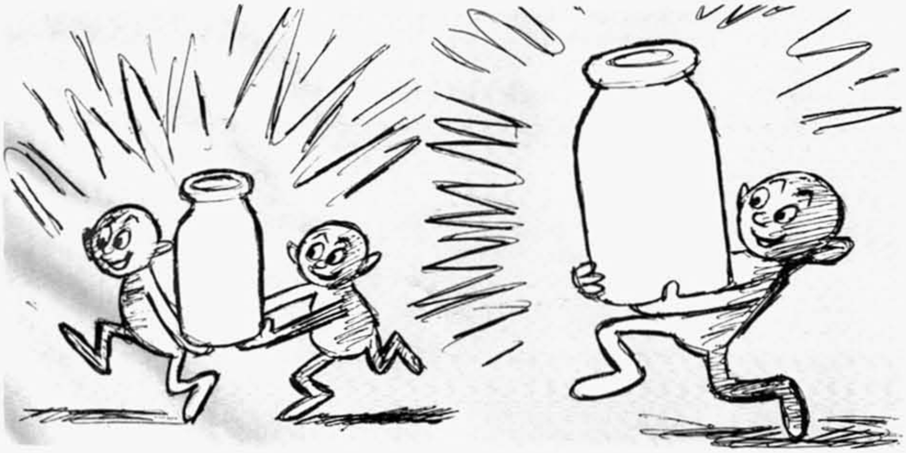
CARTOONING DOWN BROADWAY

Meanwhile, back in New York . . .

by I. Klein



THE SUNSHINE MAKERS. Above: The "gloom" characters. Below: The "joys" carrying bottled sunshine for their war against the "glooms." Redrawn for FILM COMMENT by I. Klein.



Bill Tytla got a bright look in his eyes when I mentioned, one Saturday afternoon in the Spring of 1934, that except for *The New Yorker*, most magazines weren't buying my cartoons any more—because the Depression had driven them out of business. "You were an animator before you jumped into magazine cartooning," he said. "You animated on The Katzenjammer Kids, Mutt and Jeff, Krazy Kat. Maybe you could do some free-lance animation to give your income a lift. Burt Gillett is back in town, as directing supervisor of the Van Buren Animation Studio."

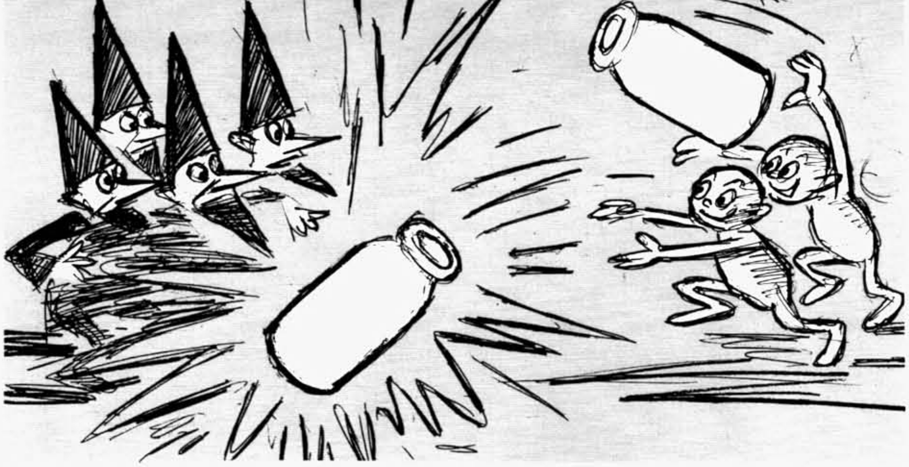
Bill, who would later become a top animator at the Disney studio (designing important sequences for SNOW WHITE, FANTASIA, and DUMBO), had signed on at Van Buren after learning how serious the studio was about competing with Disney. The boss, Mr. Amedée Van Buren, had hired Burt Gillett, the director of the smash THREE LITTLE PIGS, away from Disney at the then-fabulous salary of $400 per week. If that kid Disney in Hollywood made a big hit, Mr. Van Buren reasoned, it must have been because he had the right director: Burt Gillett. Now Burt was in the process of reorganizing the Van Buren studio.

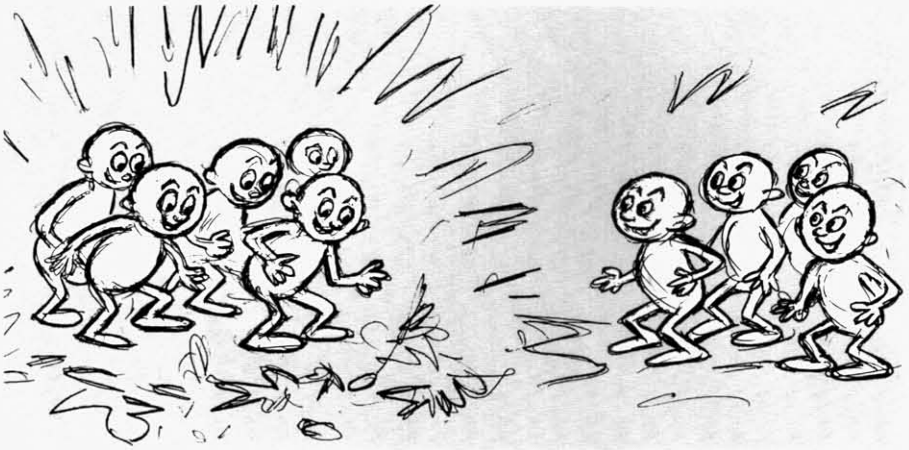
When I arrived at their offices in the 729 Seventh Avenue building (it still stands, just off Broadway, and still houses a number of film companies), I immediately realized the extent of Burt's reorganization. By a coincidence, it was the same floor of the same building that had once been the location of Hearst's International, where I'd held my first job at animated cartooning. But the office was changed beyond recognition. Walls, partitions, everything had been rearranged—except for the Men's Room.

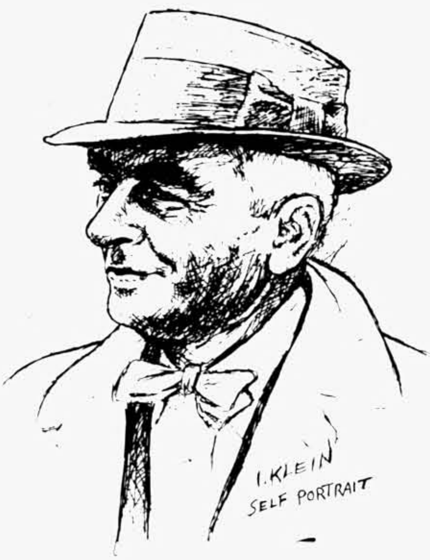
Burt Gillett had changed, too, since the days ten years earlier when we'd worked together for The Associated Animators in Long Island City. Now he wore an expensive-looking suit that fit perfectly and was pressed to cardboard sharpness. In our conversation he told me I could either animate or do story work, but on staff—no free-lance. I chose to animate, we agreed on a salary, and I started the following Monday.

I did not meet Mr. Van Buren then or at any other time during my months at the Van Buren Studio. But along the way I learned that he had made his money on the fringes of show business—supplying peep-show machines to Penny Arcades—before buying into the Aesop's Fables Studio, which was subsequently named after its new owner. At work, he sat behind a desk that hid his shortness of stature, and made any employee summoned into the Sanctum stand in his presence: there were no other chairs in the room!

When I reported to work the following Monday, I saw some familiar faces







Above left: In THE SUNSHINE MAKERS, the "joys" attack the "glooms" with bottled sunshine. Left: The "glooms" are happily transformed into "joys." Redrawn for FILM COMMENT by I. Klein. Above: I. Klein self-portrait.

(George Stallings, George Rufle, and Carl "Mike" Mayer) and some new ones: Bill Littlejohn, Jack Zander, Pete Burness, and a guy named Frank Tashlin. Gillett had three directors working under him: Jim Tyer, Steve Muffati, and Ted Eshbaugh. I was assigned to Eshbaugh's unit, to animate a cartoon called PASTRYTOWN; my sequence involved a lot of elves acting out the trimming on a wedding cake. I was pleased to discover that, though my experience in animation was completely with silent films, I could catch on quickly to the technique of making cartoons talk.

Each Saturday (we worked five-and-a-half days a week), Burt Gillett would call his animators into the screening room for a lecture on Disney animation methods; sometimes a Disney animator who happened to be in New York would talk to us. Burt would also read from a chart how much footage each animator had completed. My first week, when he came to Littlejohn's name, Burt said, "Bill, this is no good. You only did six feet." Littlejohn only shrugged his shoulders and looked sad, so I found myself speaking up: "Burt, the scene Bill's working on [for PASTRYTOWN] is full of elves riding egg-beaters on unicycles inside a huge bowl of cake-mix—a hell of a lot of work!" Burt could appreciate the importance of quality over quantity, and lauded Littlejohn for his work.

The studio produced a variety of cartoon subjects. I can remember animating sequences of grandfather clocks, humanized, for a film Jim Tyer directed, and scenes with a parrot for a "Toonerville Folks" cartoon; also little flame characters for a picture directed by Steve Muffati.

Later on I animated about twenty-five or thirty per cent of a color cartoon, THE SUNSHINE MAKERS, for Ted Eshbaugh—a story about some happy sunshine elves, in conflict with gloomy elves, who used their secret weapon of bottled sunshine to disperse the forces of gloom. As the picture was being finished, there was an ominous mood in the studio. People were being fired before they could really prove themselves, and Burt Gillett seemed more interested in building partitions between floor areas than in supervising cartoon production. When I asked him how he liked my animation in THE SUNSHINE MAKERS, he answered that one scene I did was all right. I told him that I'd done a good part of the picture, he responded as he had to my defense of Littlejohn's work: "I didn't know that!"

Earlier in 1934, before joining the Van Buren Studio, I'd been offered an animation job at Charles Mintz's Screen Gems Studio, but had chosen to remain in New York, where I could keep in contact with the magazine editors, especially at *The New Yorker,* who continued to publish my occasional cartoons. Toward the end of the year, however, Ted Sears, an old friend who had become a story man at Disney, wrote me saying that Walt was interested in seeing any story material or gag lines I might have for his films; and in response I sent Ted a story board of my adaptation of "The Emperor's New Clothes," with the characters drawn as familiar, fairy-tale men and women.

In view of later developments at the Disney studio, I believe Ted's letter to me is worth quoting from: "Walt liked the way that story you worked up was presented. Having just completed THE PIED PIPER, we've just come to the conclusion that our best screen values are small, cute, animal characters, and we haven't advanced far enough to handle humans properly and make them perform well enough to compete with real actors."

I sent Ted no more material for Disney. But by that time I was fed up with Gillett and the Van Buren studio, so I went back full-time to magazine cartooning. Then again I received a call from the Charles Mintz studio. This time, my wife Ann and I decided to go to Hollywood. We arrived there in January 1935, and I plunged into work the day after our arrival. For a year I animated Krazy Kat (this time with sound), Scrappy, and other Screen Gems characters.

We were able to socialize with a lot of old friends, Ted Sears included. One evening Ted remarked, "When you arrived in Hollywood, I told Walt Disney that Klein had just come to town to work for Charles Mintz. Walt said, 'Why the hell didn't he come to work for me?' I answered, 'Why the hell didn't you ask him?' " Two weeks later I was at my animation desk at the Disney studio. But that's another story . . . ⁂

DREAM MASTERS I:

WALT DISNEY

by Jonathan Rosenbaum

The Supreme Heart-crusher contains multitudes: Hugh Hefner, Leni Riefenstahl, John and Henry Ford

In some respects, there may be no cultural figure in the West who is as potentially controversial as Walt Disney, even though love and hatred for what he represents are frequently felt by the same people. At the same time, there is certainly no other filmmaker whose aesthetical and ideological preoccupations have permeated so much of modern life that, paradoxically, his omnipresence verges on invisibility. Even beyond the grave, continuing manifestations of his vision have become so integral to American society that they are commonly regarded as natural and relatively unquestioned parts of the landscape, like a salt shaker or a babysitter or a place to go on vacation.

It has been reported that in 1966, the year that Disney died, two hundred and forty million people saw at least one of his movies while eight hundred million read a book or magazine bearing his imprint. One would not be unduly surprised to learn that last year the figures were even higher. In an uncharacteristically provocative and rather corrosive account of the opening of Disney World in *Newsweek* (October 18, 1971), Joseph Morgenstern charged that Walt Disney Productions was "nothing more or less than a royalist plot, a computer program to take over the United States and turn it into a continental Magic Kingdom....

"There is reason to suspect that the Disney interests have done more than install an Audio-Animatronic Nixon in the Hall of Presidents here, that the man in Washington is programmed to abdicate in favor of a Disney-designated ruler.

"And why not? Who else but Disney has been able to build an American city that works? All the answers are here. [...] What works here can work in a larger Magic Kingdom. [...]

"In Walt we can trust to reform our schools and put history in its proper perspective: an Attica land in which Audio-Animatronicized prisoners sing the praises of Governor Rockefeller for respecting their right to privacy, a Thinktankland in which Dan Ellsberg takes the Pentagon papers with a grain of salt. In Walt we can trust to clear the slums, renew the cities, wipe out poverty and the balance-of-payments deficit by putting up turnstiles and charging admission to our shores. It is our manifest destiny to become Disneyland to the world."

If Morgenstern's anger sounds exaggerated, it is worth recalling that many years ago, Ray Bradbury quite seriously proposed to Disney that he run for mayor of Los Angeles. As the story is related, the gray eminence was flattered but uninterested: "Why should I run for mayor," he said, "when I'm already king?" And indeed, one could hardly blame Disney for his response. Why should he have bothered with trifles like managing a city when to minds all over the country he already came across as the benevolent ruler of the universe? How many of us remember Uncle Walt on television, situated in his cozy study with All the World's Knowledge and All the Great Literary Classics bound in leather—the titles lettered in gold, if we had color TV—presiding benignly over his globe of the world, which he patiently explained and described to us?

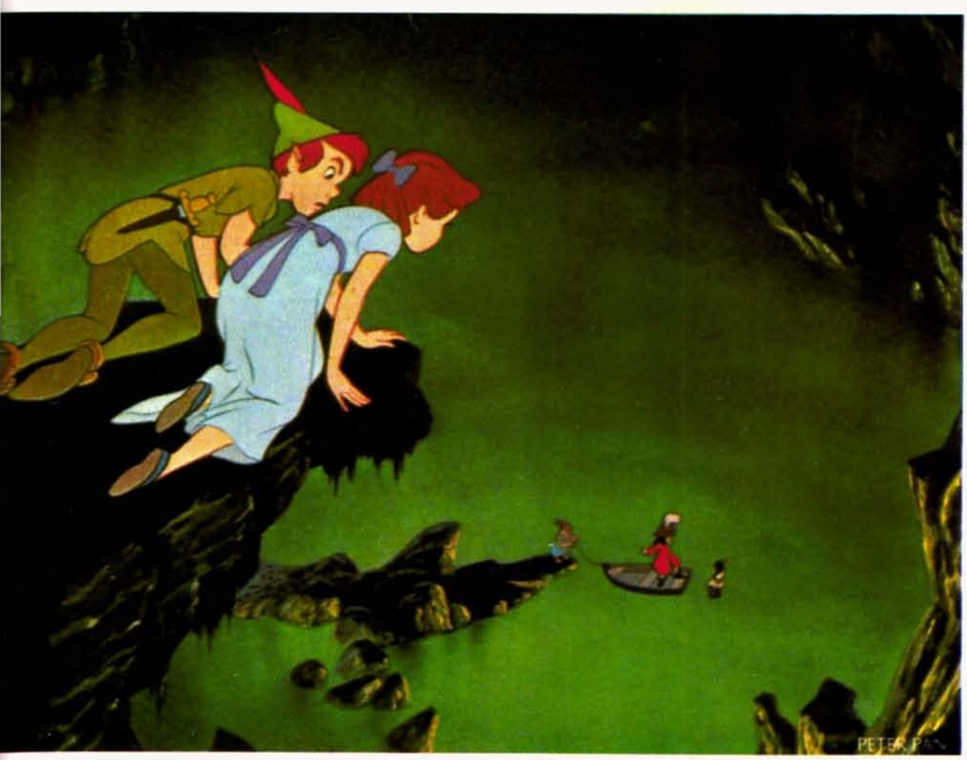
It was and is a strange relationship that he had with that globe: not at all like the one that Chaplin had with his own globe in THE GREAT DICTATOR, because it wasn't subject to easy irony or ridicule—no, it was much too good-natured and paternal for that, too harmless in all of its most obvious implications. Like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, whenever or however they appear, it usually makes one smile because it is so cheerfully legible. A critic once remarked to me that much of the continuing excitement of THE GREAT DICTATOR resided in the fact that, when Chaplin made it, he was probably more widely known than any other human on the planet, *including* Hitler. Whether or not this is true, the mind boggles before the likelihood that the non-human and imaginary Mickey Mouse may be even more universally familiar: according to Lewis Jacobs in *The Rise of the American Film* (1939), "His popularity outranks that of kings and dictators; he is the best-known figure of the twentieth century." I don't know whether he has penetrated Red China yet and I hope he never does, but I rather suspect he is likely to get there in some form or another even before Coca-Cola.

All of this is unsettling, awesome, and extremely problematical to deal with, because, like it or not—and most audiences like it—Disney *does* embody a specific aesthetic intelligence; and for the past thirty years, intellectuals have generally refused to take him seriously on any level at all. A besetting limitation of Richard Schickel's useful and factually interesting *The Disney Version* (Avon Books, 1968) is that it virtually dismisses Disney as an artist while pursuing various social implications of his career—as if talent, integrity, and taste were all somehow synonymous and interchangeable. (If one approves of it, it's art; if one disapproves, it's mass culture.) And other studies, usually more sympathetic, tend to sing praises to Disney's "artistry" without seriously acknowledging anything else.

A formidable task faced by any Disney critic is the squaring of art with ideology without distorting the nature or values of either. In the absence of a methodology that can adequately accomodate both aspects, I have limited myself here to a few notes and suggestions, listed under four headings. For the sake of convenience, my range of references has been narrowed to a few of the animated and semi-animated features—not only because these tend to be the best-known works, but also because they appear to be the richest single area for investigation. Unfortunately, the bulk of the early "Silly Symphonies" and many of the features are notoriously difficult to come by, and not having been around for the massive Disney retrospective at Lincoln Center in 1973, I can't be quite as comprehensive in my use of examples as

I'd like to be. A recent Paris revival of SALUDOS AMIGOS, for example, was welcome; but how often does one get to see THE THREE CABALLEROS outside of, say, Buenos Aires? (An Argentine friend has told me that it is quite popular there, and shown almost perpetually.)

(1) Authorship. No one has ever been able to tackle the slippery matter of assigning Disney precise authorship. On the one hand, the cartoon features exhibit a style that is both unmistakable and all-pervasive: a tree in a Disney film is a Disney tree, a doorknob is a Disney doorknob. On the other hand, Disney was not even capable of duplicating the famous "Disney signature" that appears on the credits of each of his films. Five directors are listed on the credits of DUMBO, six in BAMBI, but the Disney style of animation persists as a recognizable entity even up to the present, regardless of who happens to be working at the studio, and despite the frequent modifications (e.g., the influence of U.P.A. animation in ALICE IN WONDERLAND, the even flatter greeting-card perspectives in more recent films like THE ARISTOCATS).



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In certain respects, the creative relationship between Disney and his films might be seen as roughly equivalent to the one between Hugh Hefner and *Playboy*: in and above the multiple contributions, the master fantasy of one individual finds a setting for them all, a "perfect" landscape continually rebuilt, redecorated, and elaborated by others—rather like the made-to-order pornography written for the sole consumption of wealthy *À Rebours* types, except for the crucial fact that Disney and Hefner both have "cross-section" personalities. There are obviously a lot of people around who feel as ambivalent about sex and nature as Disney and Hefner (respectively) do, and experience much the same mixture of worship and fear in regard to both categories. The wholesomeness projected by the worldview of each empire is situated in a porcelain temple of the mind where all notions of waste become magically absent, swept away by water that is kept permanently purified, thanks to beneficent, invisible powers. The categories are thus enabled to maintain their pristine and ideal states: pure idea, without the threat of contamination offered by any experience but a vicarious one.

A man whose highly ambivalent feelings about art were expressed equally well by the term "Silly Symphony" and by his notorious comment after seeing one of the sequences in FANTASIA ("Gee, this'll *make* Beethoven!") may never have resolved these conflicts—he never really had to—but he certainly knew what he liked. And the Disney style might be described as the putting into practice, by countless employees, of what Disney liked.

(2) Style and vision: a comparison. Perhaps the one word that could best encapsulate this style is idealization. It is chiefly this quality that suggests a rather strong parallel between Disney's vision and Leni Riefenstahl's—a dream of perfection and simplicity that makes every detail on the screen an expressive part of a continuous animistic whole, implicity turning the entire cosmos into a single idea. THE BLUE LIGHT, Riefenstahl's first feature, is full of striking correspondences to the cartoon features. It begins with the framing device of a luxurious leather-bound volume being opened to lead us into the story proper; even in Riefenstahl's glistening blacks and whites, the book's cover appears to shine with the regal splendor of inlaid gold. The intense pantheism and the towering vistas of the landscape shots, the poetic innocence and purity of the heroine (played by Riefenstahl herself), the telepathy and empathy shown by animals (a lamb and a dog) toward her fluctuating moods, the sheer terror of her flight from angry villagers and the sheer intolerance of their persecution, the misty idealism of the blue light itself shining on a mountain top before the diamonds that provide its source are despoiled by greedy invaders (like the hunters who invade the paradisial forest in BAMBI): all are recognizable features of the Disney kingdom.

Indeed, one could trace this relationship further into certain aspects of the later, better known Riefenstahl films, TRIUMPH OF THE WILL and OLYMPIA. The arrival of Hitler's plane over Nuremberg in the former suggests the weightless flights of Peter Pan and Mary Poppins over London; the monumental low-angle shots of certain Nazi figures echo the camera's mythic discovery of Bambi's father, standing proudly on an imposing cliff to witness his son's birth; the monstrous rally décor (sets by Albert Speer) and its dwarfing of individuals is comparable to the palace in CINDERELLA; the torch-bearing sequence that opens OLYMPIA and the equally remarkable "light show" that concludes it each find rough counterparts in FANTASIA.

As the latter example surely indicates, Riefenstahl is formally much more sophisticated than Disney, and this comparison is not meant to imply direct stylistic influence in either direction or any precise ideological equivalence, but rather to isolate a particular aesthetic attitude that is unusually *open* to ideology because of its child-like innocence and its predilection for primal myths of unity and perfection.[1] As a further indication—if not a demonstration—of the compatibility of these two temperaments, it is worth noting that, according to Robert Gardner (FILM COMMENT, Winter 1965), when Riefenstahl visited the United States in 1938, Disney was "the only film celebrity to greet her publicly, out of the scores that professed to admire her."

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[1] If Riefenstahl's style and vision have any other contemporary echoes, these are to be found, perhaps, in some of the exhilarations of Michael Wadleigh's WOODSTOCK, the TRIUMPH OF THE WILL of Sixties counter-culture, which uses its split-screen images and stereo-sound to create an epic portrayal of Consensus, which the audience is invited to lean back and absorb like a three-hour bath. A crucial cross-reference to Riefenstahl *and* WOODSTOCK is, of course, Cecil B. De Mille.

(3) Ideological substructures. Conscious and unconscious propaganda of all kinds are observable in the cartoon features. A characteristic and fairly innocuous form of conscious propaganda can be found in the various attempts to persuade children to "behave properly" in SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (1937): household chores such as dusting and dishwashing are shown to be "fun"—"Whistle While You Work" (although Snow White appears to do most of the whistling, the animals most of the work)—while another lengthy musical number is devoted to the importance of washing up before eating. The first of Disney's cartoon features was regarded by many as an enormous financial risk, and it appears likely that a particular effort was made here to please the parents as well as the children.

Probably less conscious are the implications behind the decision to have the dwarfs chase the Wicked Witch up a mountain and to her death (a beautiful, blurred fadeout of two buzzards circling down a chasm after her) before they've had a chance to discover that she's fed Snow White a poison apple—in fact, before they've bothered to inquire into Snow White's welfare at all. Their vengeful pursuit is motivated by nothing but the forest animals' mute warnings—that is, by pure hysteria—and the Witch's evil has already been depicted so vividly and persuasively (to us, if not to them) that it is virtually impossible not to share their mob-like response as they goad her to her doom. Curiously, Snow White, who is visibly young enough to be the daughter of any of the dwarfs, acts like a mother towards them, a clever ploy permitting various subliminal satisfactions to children and parents alike. When the dwarfs need affection or guidance, she is maternal; when she needs to be avenged—or protected and preserved in a glass casket for the Prince's arrival—*they* assume the parental role.

A sample instance of submerged nationalistic propaganda can be seen in PINOCCHIO (1940). A quick survey of the various nationalities crowded together in the plot reveal a lower-class Italian (Stromboli) and two pseudo-English tricksters (the foxes) as villains;[2] the "bad boy" who is Pinocchio's naughty counterpart is a vulgar Cockney, as is the demonic coachman who transports them both to Pleasure Island; Geppetto, the "father," is apparently Swiss; Jiminy Cricket, whose attire and movements seem partially derived from the Chaplin tramp, appears to be a subtle blend of English and American attributes. Of the remaining speaking parts, only Pinocchio himself and the maternal fairy watching over him come across as "purely" American, and rather homogenized specimens at that.

The bebop crows in DUMBO (1946) are commonly cited as an example of Disney's racism; but it should be kept in mind that this aspect becomes modified—if not eliminated—in foreign-dubbed versions, which are generally the only versions available in most non-English-speaking countries. (The same, of course, applies to many of the nationalities in PINOCCHIO.) In French, for instance, the crows come across as *clochards* as much as black stereotypes; the two caricatures become merged and confused.

If the racism of SONG OF THE SOUTH (1946) is infinitely more disturbing and consequential, this is because it bowdlerizes American history with such consummate mastery that its tactics go virtually unnoticed. Aided by the richly textured color photography of Gregg Toland and the frenetic emotional traumas of the plot, the film captures and reflects the consciousness of a child so adroitly that all of its submerged biases are made to ring like simple mythic truths. The physical pain of the cartoon sequences (e.g., Br'er Rabbit and the Briar Patch) alternates with the emotional pain of the live-action (the departure of the boy's father from the plantation corresponding to the experience of the recently-ended war, when many fathers were away): both lines culminate in the hysterical climax of the boy chasing across a pasture after Uncle Remus, departing on a wagon for Atlanta, before he is charged and gored by a killer bull.

Uncle Remus, who has assumed the parental rôle of the missing father, has been ordered to stop seeing the boy by the latter's mother after telling him stories (the interpolated cartoons), which *she* thinks gets him into various kinds of mischief and trouble, but *we* know are conventional and respectable moral lessons that have the opposite effect. The impossibility and sheer absurdity of a black slave's being (in effect) "fired," sadly packing his meager possessions into a bandanna fixed on the end of a pole, and boarding a wagon for Atlanta, successfully eluded critics and audiences not only in 1946, but in 1972, when the film was reissued (to reap greater profits than ever before), and not because of any sleight-of-hand in the dialogue: quite simply, Uncle Remus's status as a slave is ignored when it no longer suits the story's purposes. (His status as a man is similarly held in check by a scene in the plantation kitchen, when it's clearly established that he's interested in the presiding mammy only because of her cooking.) He exists as a literal appendage to the boy's ego—returning, in the last scene, to revive him from a coma—and is scaled down throughout the film to fit this emotional logic. Needless to say, similar "improvements" in history abound in Disneyland and Disney World—executed with comparable skill, and usually received with the same lack of resistance.

(4) Towards an aesthetic evaluation. For critics of the Thirties and early Forties, Disney was an essential figure in the arts. In 1930, Eisenstein declared him to be the most interesting filmmaker in America, and over the decade that followed, Erwin Panofsky praised the early cartoons and "certain sequences" in the later ones as "a chemically pure distillation of cinematic possibilities"; Gilbert Seldes offered many sympathetic critiques; and even E.M. Forster published a brief tribute to Mickey Mouse. Lewis Jacobs's assessment of Disney in *The Rise of the American Film* is certainly more likely to raise eyebrows today than it was in 1939:

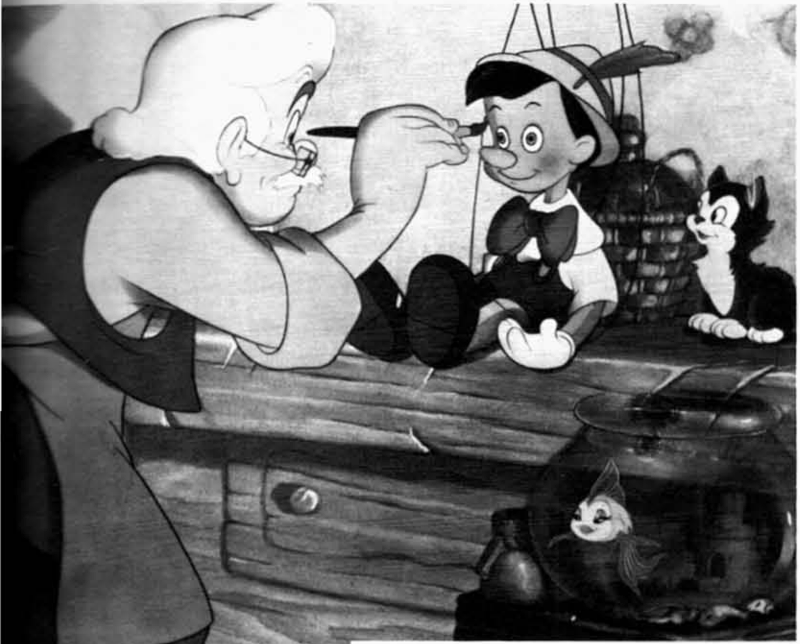
"In the realm of films that combine sight, sound, and color Disney is still unsurpassed. The wise heir of forty years of film tradition, he consummates the cinematic contributions of Melies, Porter, Griffith, and the Europeans. He has done more with the film medium since it added sound and color than any other director, creating a form that is of great and vital consequence not only for what it is but for what it portends. He is the first of the sight-sound-color film virtuosos, and the fact that he is still young and still developing makes him an exciting and important figure to watch."

But by the middle Forties, after the commercial failure of FANTASIA and several government-supported films led Disney to a more mercantile attitude towards his productions, his critical reputation was already on the decline. And by the middle Sixties, one could say that he was more generally regarded as anything *but* an artist—at any rate, something much closer to Henry Ford than to John Ford—to the extent that Richard Schickel could confidently assert in *The Disney Version*, without apparent fear of contradiction, that "Our environment, our sensibilities, the very quality of both our waking and sleeping hours, are all formed largely by people with no more artistic conscience and intelligence than a cumquat."

For Panofsky, Disney's "fall from grace" occurred when "SNOW WHITE introduced the human figure and when FANTASIA attempted to picturalize The World's Great Music." Today this judgment sounds a little too pat, although it is easy enough to see what he meant. It was probably inevitable that once Disney took on the challenge of cartoon features he would come closer to the conventions of non-animated Hollywood films and further away from the relative abstractness and "purity" of the early "Silly Symphonies," at least in the overall breadth of his films.

But one also suspects that Disney was kept in the Pantheon as long as he remained a novelty, and dismissed as soon as he became commonplace—a ruling that

[2] Otis Ferguson has observed that the lead fox can be traced back to John Barrymore, the goldfish to Betty Boop.



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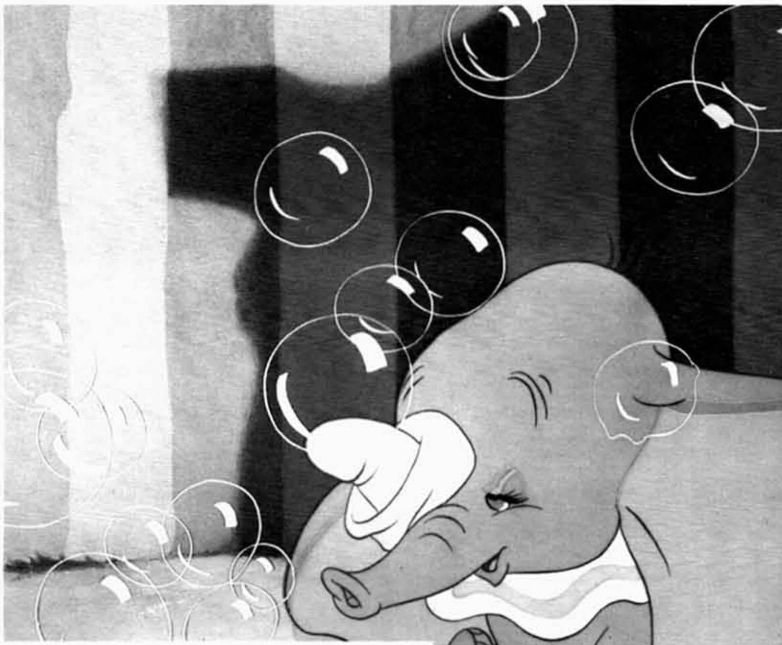

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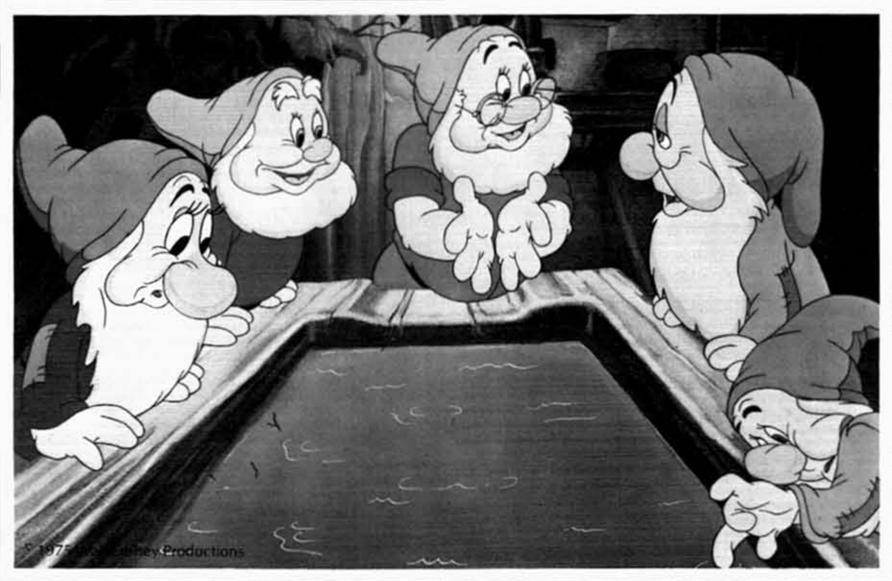
Above: PINOCCHIO. Below: ALICE IN WONDERLAND. Right: SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS.



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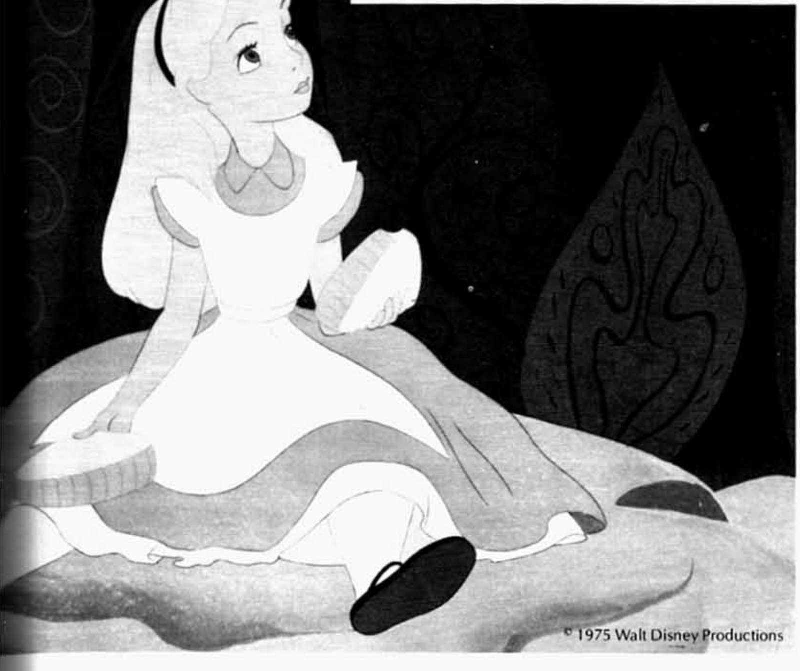
Above: DUMBO. Below: Mickey Mouse in the Sorcerer's Apprentice sequence from FANTASIA.



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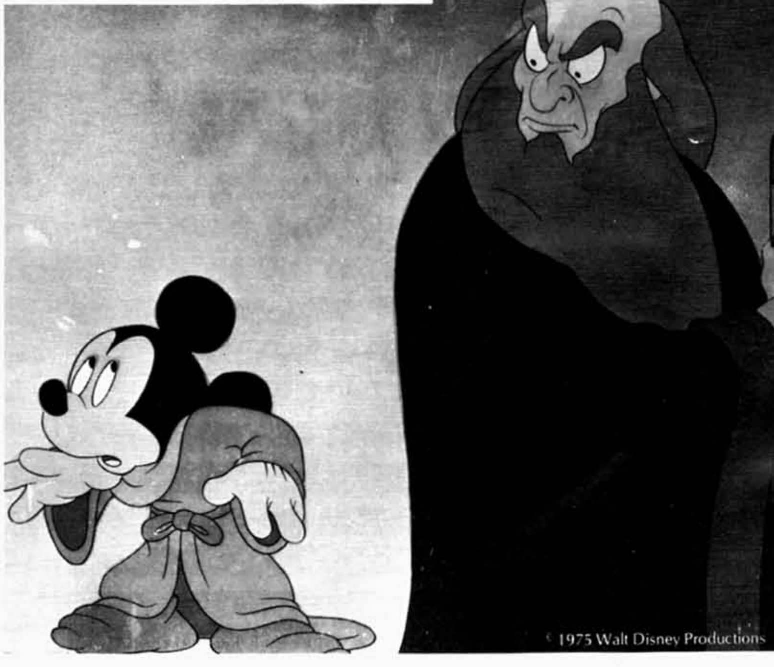

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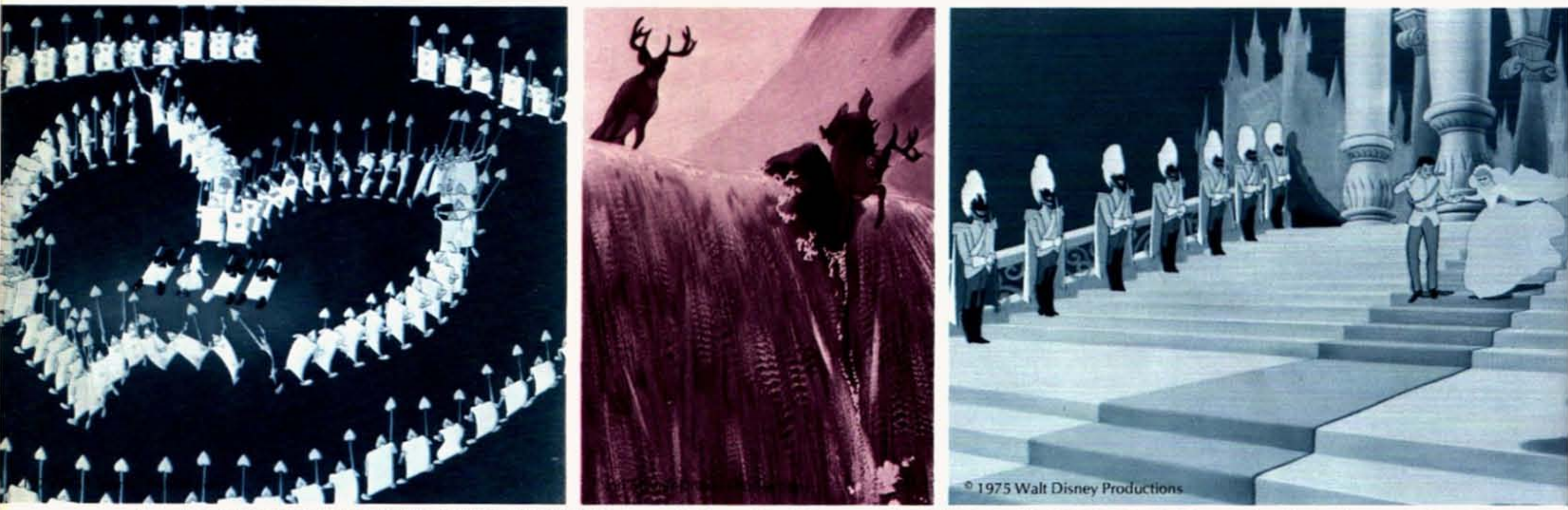
has little to do with the intrinsic worth of his separate films, and a great deal to do with shifting fashions. One might add that the use of the human figure and the musical pretensions of FANTASIA were already implicit in the anthropomorphism and use of music in the earlier cartoons, and a case could certainly be made that what Disney lost in purism he gained in proficiency.

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS is rich with a kind of pictorial beauty that is light years ahead of the crude barnyard effects of the early Mickey Mouse efforts; and it is more than incidentally graced by a score (music by Frank Churchill, words by Larry Morey) that is probably superior to that of any musical released the same year.[3] The fairy-tale castle occupied by the Witch—a lovely construction that seems to combine aspects of Brueghel's Tower of Babel with a distillation of almost every other storybook dream palace—is so rich in suggestions that a near-replica, on which former Disney employees collaborated, wound up serving admirably as Xanadu in the powerful opening shots of CITIZEN KANE: not only the long-shot vista of it standing on a mountain, but virtually the same lap dissolve to an almost identical grilled window in the subsequent closer shot. In a more general way, the water effects in the bottom of a well and in a stream are animated with a translucent brilliance that recalls some of the watery dissolves in Murnau's SUNRISE, while the throbbing lights and billows of magical smoke in the Witch's laboratory evoke some of the look of his FAUST.

If SNOW WHITE and PINOCCHIO can be said to take on a related visual aspiration, this appears to be—at least intermittently—a recreation of the silent German "expressionist" cinema in color and sound, simplified, abstracted, and "perfected" to the point were characters are truly continuous with the décor, and actors are no longer strictly necessary, except as disembodied voices for the speaking parts. But SNOW WHITE surpasses PINOCCHIO in its stylistic integration of character with character, and of characters with settings. The forest animals are carefully individuated, and yet, like the crowds in METROPOLIS, they often seem to breathe and move—implicitly, feel and think—in a common pulse. The same paradox applies, of course, to the seven dwarfs: they are both a gallery of distinct types and the interworking parts of a continuous organism, like fingers in a fist.

Perhaps the pinnacle of Disney's pictorial achievement is to be found in the Dance of the Pink Elephants in DUMBO (a film, incidentally, that appeared not long after the alleged decline announced by Panofsky). This prodigious dream sequence, with its continual shifts of color, shape, and scale to match the metamorphoses of dream-elephants into a variety of apparitions—beginning as champagne bubbles, and ending as clouds—could probably be stacked against any of the "Silly Symphonies" for formal beauty, purity, imagination, lack of pretension, *and* its use of music: for its surrealist terror, it even approaches some of the best of Tex Avery. On the other hand, one cannot call the sequence an entirely original one: some of the beasties and their transformations can be partially traced back to the early sound masterpieces of Max Fleischer.

Nothing else in DUMBO quite equals this, although scenes of a train arriving in a small town at night and a circus tent being erected in the rain have a sullen poetry that unexpectedly evokes some of the paintings of Edward Hopper. There is a tendency for most of the features to break down into separate sequences, from the best (PINOCCHIO, DUMBO, ALICE IN WONDERLAND) to the worst (THE LADY AND THE TRAMP, SLEEPING BEAUTY, THE SWORD IN THE STONE). As Marie-Thérèse Poncet and others have noted, FANTASIA is nearly always discussed as a feature when it is in fact a collection of shorts, and this applies to most of the other "feature" cartoons as well.[4]


© 1975 Walt Disney Productions

From left: ALICE IN WONDERLAND; BAMBI; CINDERELLA; James Baskett as Uncle Remus, with Bobby Driscoll in SONG OF THE SOUTH; the *clochard* crows in DUMBO.

One of the most interesting things about SALUDOS AMIGOS (1947) is the various transitions between abstract and concrete approaches to the same subject. In live-action, we see Disney animators crossing sections of South America by plane, sketching different forms of local color while the narrator rattles off canned itineraries and cultural tidbits ("The music is strange and exotic," etc.); eventually the sketches become cartoons. The cartoons, in turn, go from abstract to concrete and back again: each begins with a plane flying over not so much a country as a three-dimensional *map*, like the opening shot of Florida in DUMBO, with cities and countries indicated by printed names—a chip off of Uncle Walt's globe so to speak. This becomes a more concrete location as soon as the plane lands. And then the cartoon might turn relatively abstract again, as in the semi-drippy final sequence, "Watercolor of Brazil," which culminates in arty silhouette effects after red drops of paint turn into storks, yellow drops into bananas, and then the bananas into crows. Or on a more subtle level, the visually prosaic antics of Donald Duck as a naive and affable American tourist suddenly becomes a kitsch extravaganza of pictorial and color values, as duck and assorted pottery go toppling down a mountain slope into the sea, while the bay is lit by a sunset that resembles a hemorrhage. Like some of the train shots in DUMBO, it is calender art raised to a level of stupefied genius.

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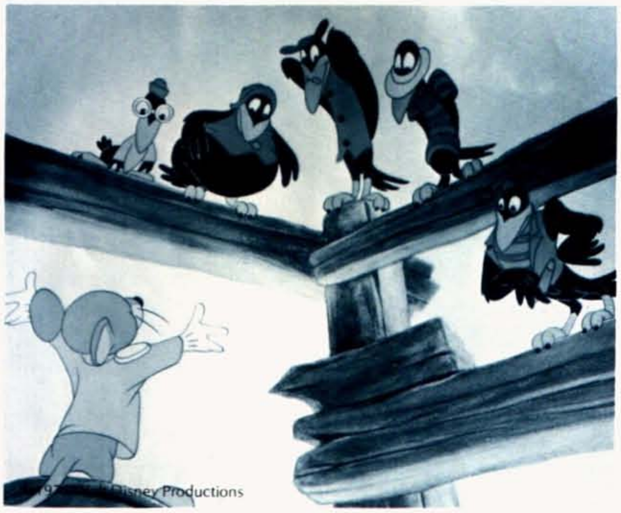
[3] At least three of its songs—"Someday My Prince Will Come," "Heigh-Ho," "One Song"—have entered the jazz repertoire and served as graceful frameworks for improvisations by Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Dave Brubeck, and many others (a practice initiated by Brubeck, although Davis made it fashionable). Other "Disney" songs to have served this function include "When You Wish Upon a Star" and "Give a Little Whistle" from PINOCCHIO, "Alice in Wonderland," and "Chim Chim Cheree" from MARY POPPINS—the latter performed by John Coltrane.

[4] Poncet is probably the most exhaustive of the French Disney critics; cf. in particular her *L'esthetique du dessin animé* (A.G. Nizet, 1952).

Even more than other Hollywood features, Disney's are manifestly factory products in which the personalities and efforts of scores of individuals are blended and absorbed, including influences from previous films: much as Howard Hawks borrows from CASABLANCA in TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT, the sequence about Pedro the Plane in SALUDOS AMIGOS seems to owe something to Hawks's ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS. With so many identities at play in the features, it should come as no surprise that so many of them are uneven. The extraordinary thing is that such teamwork often worked as well as it did. In BAMBI, a lyrical grasp of the textures, colors, and shapes of plant life is juxtaposed with a vulgar anthropomorphism in the animals that implies an antithetical approach and attitude towards nature—analagous, perhaps, to the cosmetic "improvements" made on Hugh Hefner's Playmates over the years, particularly when pubic hair was excluded.



More than one commentator has compared Hefner to Disney, particularly as a businessman with a genius for spin-offs and a capacity to use various products as advertisements for still other products. For those interested in tracing the geneology of *Playboy*'s rabbit symbol and its multiple manifestations, it is tempting to recall all the ingenious repetitions of rabbit-shapes in the house of the March Hare in ALICE IN WONDERLAND (in the furniture, décor, family portraits, etc.): Disney's ALICE appeared in 1951, the first issue of *Playboy* two years later.

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I have a special fondness for a chummy Disney horse who appears in drag both in the Goofy-gaucho section of SALUDOS AMIGOS and the second half of ICHABOD AND MR. TOAD. (If it isn't exactly the same character, they're very close relatives.) Does my liking for that horse reflect a dislike or fear of real horses, or does it make me like real horses more? I suspect it somehow manages to do both.

I have no particular fondness for scorpions. But when I see the mating movements of a couple of them synchronized to square-dance music in one of the True-Life Adventures, I feel that a crime is being committed. Not so much a crime against scorpions—I imagine they couldn't care less—as a crime against me and my relationship to scorpions.

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A day at Disneyland, August 1971. It looks even newer than it did in 1956, the first and only other time that I visited. Technologically, it was and is one of the most extraordinary things in America. Who could blame Khrushchev for wanting to see it? Everyone appeared to assume at the time that he must have been joking; but even cinematically, there's much more of interest in Disneyland than one could have conceivably found on the set of CANCAN at the Fox studios.

In the Haunted House here—one of the undisputed masterpieces of the park, and a relatively recent addition—the programmed effects are nearly all heightened developments of cinematic possibilities and principles. You step first into a circular low-ceiling waiting-room decorated with family portraits; the doors close, the lights dim, the walls grow higher and higher and the family portraits stretch out accordingly, until eventually it's like being at the bottom of a well. The doors open, and everyone gets into little cars—continues on a journey up and down hills in a nocturnal setting, through a graveyard; past a disembodied and speaking female head that's clearly a projected (but three-dimensional) image; countless other delights. It is as "purely cinematographic" as the flight of Mephisto over western Europe in Murnau's FAUST, just as the "trip sequence" in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY is partially echoed in a Trip into the Cyclotron ride in Tomorrowland. On your way out of the Haunted House, your car passes a mirror which reveals that a grinning ghoul is sitting next to you.

Film is also centrally used in the Trip to the Moon, to depict simultaneously the receding Earth and the approaching satellite. Straight movie theaters and projections of various kinds are in evidence everywhere. And what is Main Street, U.S.A., which stands at the entrance gate, but the set for a nostalgia film like STRAWBERRY BLONDE or MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS? Disney once gave an interesting account of its governing principle: "It's not apparent at a casual glance that this street is only a scale model. We had every brick and shingle and gas lamp made five-eights true size. This costs more, but made the street a toy, and the imagination can play more freely with a toy. Besides, people like to think their world is somehow more grown up than Papa's was."

Midnight or so, passing back through the gates and into the cosmic reaches of the Disneyland parking lot, I look up at a dazzling skyful of stars, every constellation in its appointed place—stars poised and ready like raindrops about to fall. Are they Disney's too?

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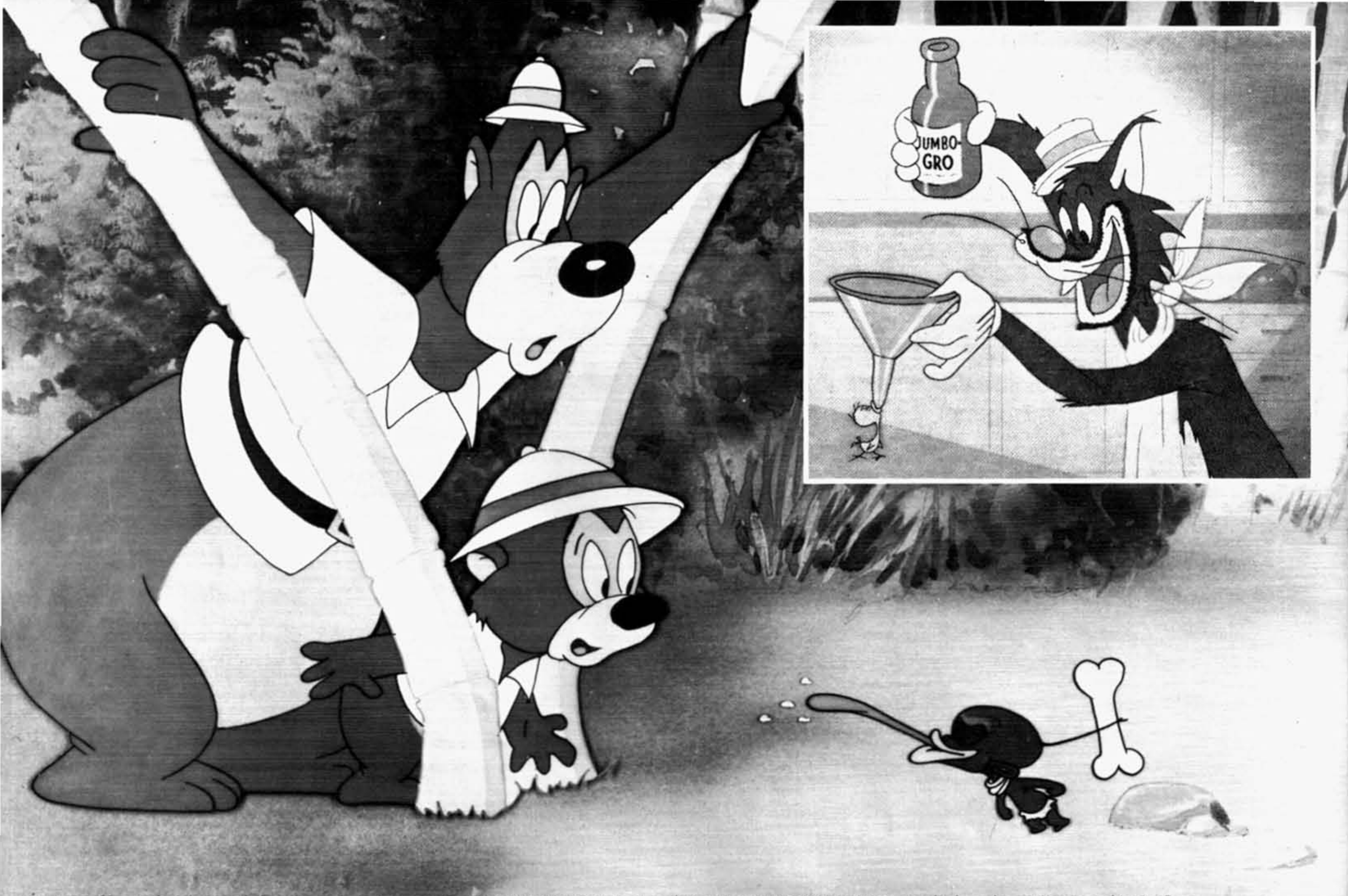
Ultimately, the strengths and weaknesses of Disney's art are both bound up in its well-preserved and self-sustaining innocence, its refusal or inability to move beyond a child's perspective. Within these boundaries, its capacity to elicit certain emotions is uncanny: at least half of the people I know were scared out of their wits by the Wicked Witch in SNOW WHITE when they were children—as I recall, I was pretty jumpy myself—and to recognize Disney's power and pre-eminence as the Supreme Heartcrusher today, all one has to do is witness the forcible separation of Dumbo from his mother at a kids' matinee, where the scene will invariably produce a disconsolate chorus of howls. And apart from the terror, there is all the cute, cuddly humor, frequently built around a kitsch dream of the Arcadia myth or the awkwardness or mere embarrassment of being a child in certain situations; cf., respectively, the nauseating centaurs moved around to Beethoven's "Pastoral" in FANTASIA, the turtle painfully making its way up a flight of stairs in SNOW WHITE.

The probable key to Disney's success is that he has shown himself capable of understanding the way that children think and feel better than any other filmmaker of his time. The question that remains is how wisely and how well he put this special understanding to use. I don't think it's a question that children alone can answer, and I don't think it can be answered simply; I suspect that a lot of us are going to continue to be bothered by it, and bothered a lot, for a very long time. ⁂



Two Avery films with *reductio ad absurdum conclusions:* KING SIZE CANARY (1947), inset, and THE HALF-PINT PIGMY (1947), in which explorers George and Junior Bear confront the second smallest pygmy in the world, nephew to "Louie," the smallest of all.

DREAM MASTERS II:

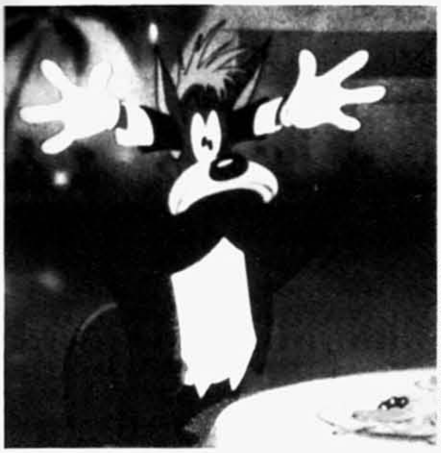
by Jonathan Rosenbaum

TEX AVERY

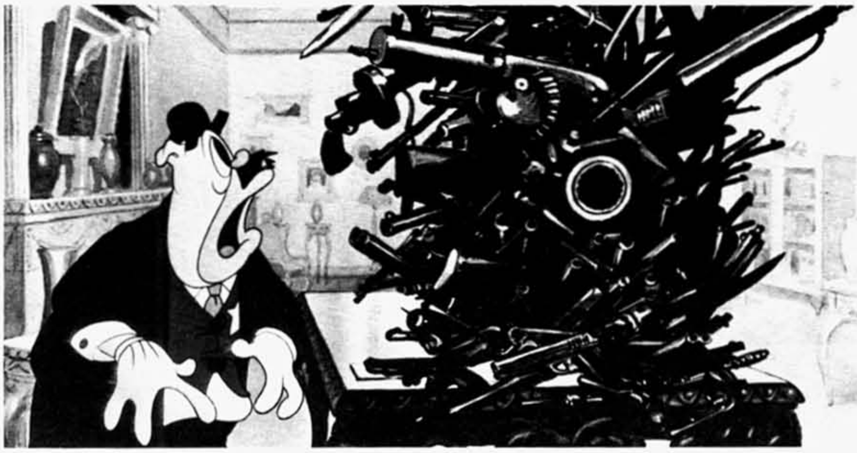
For sufferers from Disney piety, Avery offers lasting relief.

Paris, late January, my deadline a week away (later postponed). Tuesday morning, a cable arrives: YES TO DISNEY AND AVERY ARTICLE. Tuesday afternoon, rummaging through pages of frantic notes scribbled last September while watching eleven Avery cartoons on French TV (a little like reading a book while riding a bicycle), and last December, while seeing a program of eleven more at a local theater (notes in the dark are even less legible). Tuesday night, a return to the second program, inferior to the first but still accessible, more scribbling, giggling, crazies coming out of my eyes and ears. Wednesday, a fresh "mini-festival" of six Droopys comes to town. How do you notate a cyclone? Willy nilly—or should I say Chilly Willy?—I find myself living inside a Tex Avery cartoon.

It's not a bit like Disneyland. If the world of Disney is literally reducible to a funhouse, the very notion of Averyland suggests something much closer to a madhouse—a madhouse where a wise-ass dog named George can strip the skin off a live chicken with an axe, revealing black bra and panties underneath (HENPECKED HOBOES, 1946); another dog's eyes can turn into an American roadmap (COCK-A-DOODLE DOG, 1951); disembodied shoes can perform a layer-peeling striptease à la Buñuel to an enthusiastic burlesque crowd (THE PEACHY COBBLER, 1950); a dog with an Irish accent named Spike can go daffy before your eyes, drop his jaw on the ground like a slab of concrete, rattle his retinas, scream, bulge out his sockets at least a foot or two, and all but slaver at the mouth as he's herded into an ambulance by two men in white coats (DROOPY'S DOUBLE TROUBLE, 1951, an ode to sado-masochistic schizophrenia); cartoon cowboys in a cartoon saloon can watch a real Western on TV (DRAGALONG DROOPY, 1954); a clown in a flea circus can sing "My Darling Clementine" in Droopy's voice (THE FLEA CIRCUS, 1954); a deranged squirrel can comment on his own cartoon ("Y'know, I like this ending—it's silly": HAPPY-GO-NUTTY, 1944); a streetcar can make an apparently scheduled stop inside a treetrunk (SCREWBALL SQUIRREL, 1944); Fairy Godmothers can drink martinis, hop on motor scooters, and pursue Don Ameche-type wolves in pretzel-shaped zoot suits (SWINGSHIFT CINDERELLA, 1945); a cat, canary, mouse,



COURTESY JOE ADAMSON



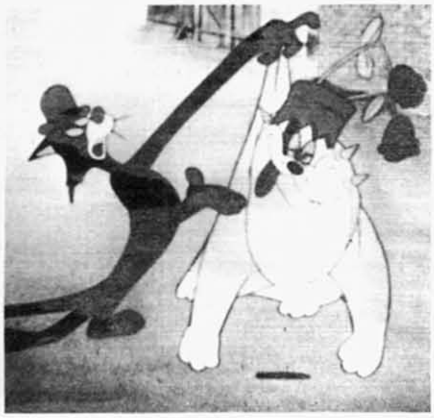
COURTESY JOE ADAMSON

and dog can grow larger than skyscrapers (KING SIZE CANARY, 1947); the culprit in a lunatic whodunit can ultimately turn out to be the live-action announcer who introduces you to the cartoon (WHO KILLED WHO?, 1943); or a piano, tractor, tree, and bus can all fall from the sky (BAD LUCK BLACKIE, 1949).[1]

Indeed, Disney and Avery are complementary and contrasting figures in many important respects. If the former has been prodigiously over-exposed, the latter, in recent years, has been just as prodigiously neglected and under-exposed. (Notwithstanding the recent—and very exceptional—Avery programs in Paris and one or two in New York, the very notion of a *comprehensive* Avery retrospective in this day and age is probably as rarefied and unlikely as a Paul Fejos Festival.)

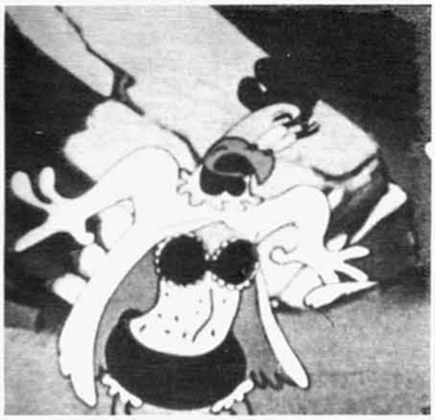
According to Manny Farber's useful categories, Disney is white elephant art in all its star-spangled trappings, while Avery, essentially concerned with proving nothing and without an honest pretension to his name, is an important figure in the termite range. Disney's exclusive focus on the experience of children is neatly balanced by Avery's preoccupation with peculiarly adult problems and concerns (mainly sex, status, and procuring food)—the voices given to his animals are nearly always grown-up ones.

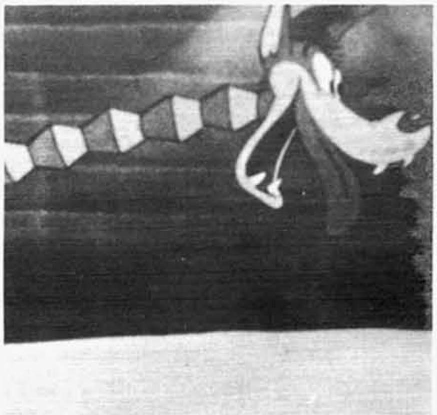
And if the aim towards "timelessness" in Disney features effectively means that most contemporary references are either accidental or non-consequential (excepting his propaganda films, the Depression uplift offered by THE THREE LITTLE PIGS, and occasional vulgarities in the rest, such as the reference to television at the end of THE SWORD IN THE STONE), the usual ten-

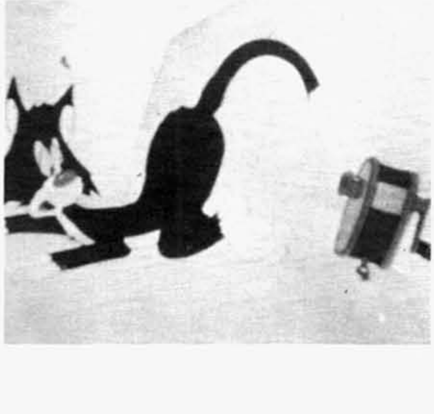


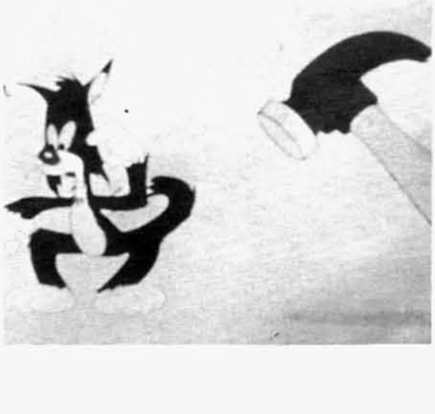
COURTESY JOE ADAMSON

Top left: The Country Wolf's impassioned response to the City Red Riding Hood's nightclub act in LITTLE RURAL RIDING HOOD (1949). Top right: A dog-faced detective orders his suspects to lay any weapons they have on the table, and winds up with an arsenal, in WHO KILLED WHO (1943). Left: Blackie demonstrates his jinxing powers in BAD LUCK BLACKIE (1949), first with a flower pot, then a piano, a tractor, an ocean liner . . . Below left: The skinned chicken in HENPECKED HOBOES (1946). Below right: The Wolf's jack-in-the-box head in SHOOTING OF DAN McGOO (1945). Bottom left: and right: Objects as Creatures in THE CAT THAT HATED PEOPLE.









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[1] In all, I've seen two dozen Avery cartoons recently (after deducting overlaps), all of them made between 1942 and 1954 and all of them MGM. Consequently I can't hope to be anything but incomplete here, and Avery's periods at Warners and Universal—which include his creations and/or developments of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Chilly Willy—have to be omitted. For a full account of Avery's career, one eagerly awaits Joe Adamson's *Tex Avery, King of Cartoons*, scheduled for publication in the near future. In the meantime, check out Adamson's interview with Avery in *Take One*, vol. 2, no. 9.

dency of an Avery cartoon, on the contrary, is to be as contemporaneous as possible, so that one finds allusions to—or echoes of—Mae West (as an Indian named Minnie Hot-cha) in DUMB HOUNDED (1943), *The Lost Weekend* (rebaptized *The Lost Squeakend*) in KING SIZE CANARY, and even President Truman at the end of DROOPY'S GOOD DEED (1951), appearing offscreen as a not very talented pianist. Inspiration frequently seems to come from non-cartoon sources: HENPECKED HOBOES (1946), which gives us a smart little dog and a large dumb one who keeps saying things like "Yeah, George, I'm gonna do good this time, George," harks back to and parodies *Of Mice and Men*, while THE FLEA CIRCUS pays glancing tribute to Busby Berkeley and DROOPY'S DOUBLE TROUBLE reflects P. G. Wodehouse by offering a butler named Jeeves.

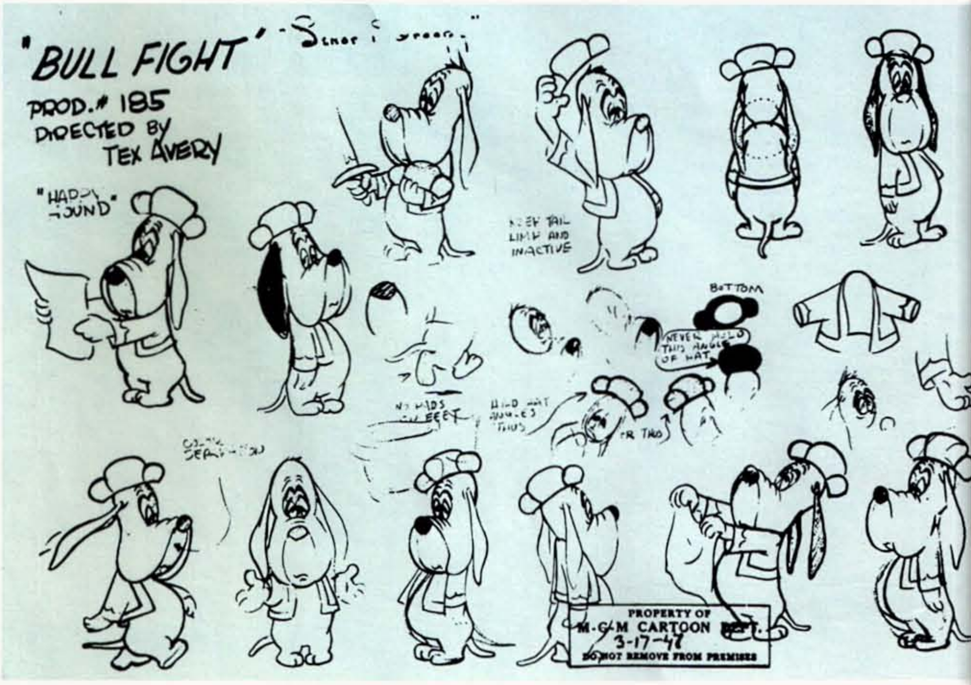
One even finds an allusion to Disney in THE PEACHY COBBLER, a side-spliting and fairly devastating parody of some of the Master's sentimental excesses. We open with an unctuous narrator introducing us to the story proper, his condescending voice drowning in bathos while the camera takes us on a tour of a kitsch Disney cottage: "One cold winter's night—long, long ago—there lived a poor old shoe cobbler and his wife . . ." Stifled sob. ". . . All they had to eat was *one crust of bread . . . whole wheat!*" Outside, a flock of pathetic little birds are shivering, and when the cobbler gives them a crust out of the Goodness of His Heart, they promptly turn into "happy little shoemaker elves"—slightly demonic versions of characteristic Disney imps.

Avery had reason to be disrespectful: while Disney in his features was generally issuing his benign pronouncements from some imaginary Mount Olympus, Avery and his team of animators and writers (usually Rich Hogan and Heck Allen) were commingling intimately with their casual audience on a strictly meat-and-potatoes level, seven or eight minutes at a time.

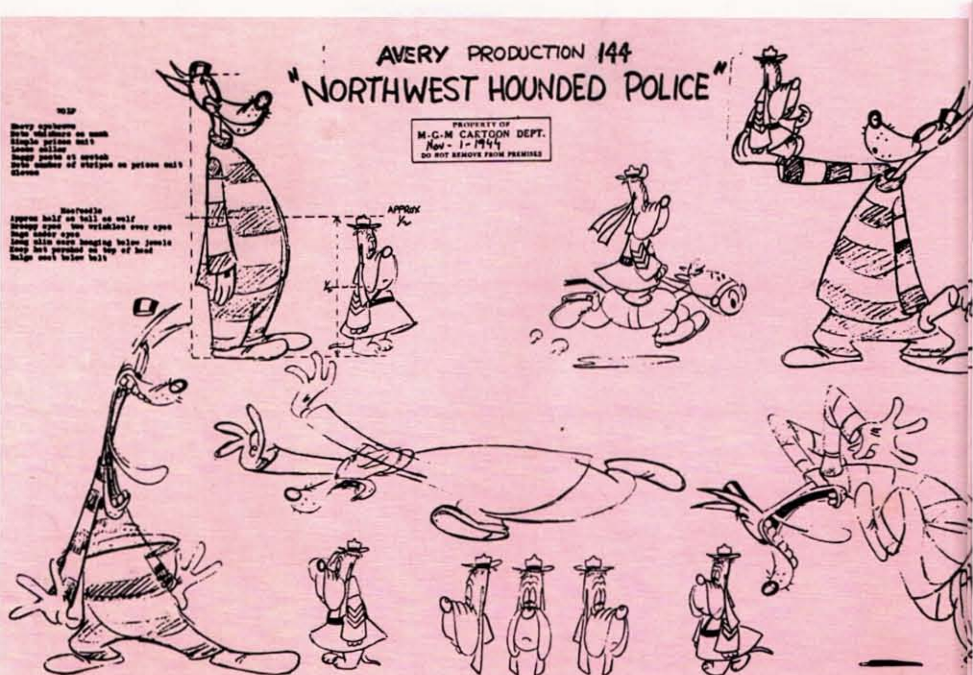
Not much worried about good taste or more than a modicum of wholesome family standards, an Avery cartoon could get cheerful laughs out of a hillbilly farmer with a speech impediment ("H'llo thar Billy boy boy boy boy boy," in BILLY BOY, 1954), jokes about Texans reflecting Avery's background (he was born in Dallas), Cinderella in a boiler suit going to work on the night-shift at a wartime munitions factory (SWINGSHIFT CINDERELLA), some arabesques describing sexual desire that defy belief, and any number of racial and ethnic jokes, each one as transparent and good-natured as the last. (One glaring exception, in BLITZ WOLF, 1942: apart from Adolf Wolf and "Der Führer der better" scrawled on a truck, one encounters a "No Dogs Allowed" sign with "Dogs" crossed out and replaced by "Japs.")

At the same time, his unusually free imagination and taste for surrealist juxtapositions occasionally recapitulate or anticipate a concept—or even an image—from an Ernst or a Magritte: an explosive shower of "defense bonds" in BLITZ WOLF and a Rock of Gibralter gag in DUMB-HOUNDED are striking approximations *avant la lettre* of Magritte's *Golconda* (1953) and *"The Castle of the Pyrenees"* (1959), respectively. (John Boorman, by the way, makes a playful allusion to the latter painting in ZARDOZ.) If the Disney factory learned something concrete from Avery, this may have been how to use objects and animals surrealistically. The two headless giraffes connected by their necks and the alligator with a handle in HALF-PINT PIGMY (1947), and particularly the use of objects as Creatures in THE CAT THAT HATED PEOPLE (1948), might well have influenced some of the forest beasties in ALICE IN WONDERLAND (1951).

To be sure, if you see as few as half a dozen Averys at a stretch, you're likely to


"BULL FIGHT" - "Senor Droopy"
PROD.# 185
DIRECTED BY TEX AVERY
"HAPPY HOUND"
KEEP TAIL LIMP AND INACTIVE
BOTTOM
NEVER HOLD THIS ANGLE OF HAT
HOLD HAT THUS
FOR THIS
PROPERTY OF
M-G-M CARTOON DEPT.
3-17-47
DO NOT REMOVE FROM PREMISES

Two Tex Avery model-sheets: for Droopy in "Bullfight," finally retitled SENOR DROOPY (1949), and for the Wolf in NORTHWEST HOUNDED POLICE (1946).



notice repetitions of gags and certain recurring obsessions (size, insomnia induced by rackets, all kinds of inside references to the cartoon you're watching), and as many as a dozen together is an experience promoting migraines and nervous exhaustion. Even so, the frantic pace isn't always sustained by consistent looniness (some of the best of Max Fleischer cartoons of the late Twenties and early Thirties—notably KOKO'S EARTH CONTROL and the extraordinarily demented "sing-along," STOOPNOCRACY—are even crazier); the blackout gags in the Droopys of the early Fifties, often isolated like beads on a string, aren't half as funny as the intricate developments and variations in the earlier ones. But in his prime efforts, Avery can rattle off a complex narrative situation so quickly and efficiently that it's all one can do to keep abreast of it, and Scott Bradley's carefully synchronized musical scores—with their generous helpings of Rossini and other classical touchstones—are often remarkable merely by virtue of the fact that they don't stray behind the action.

Sexual hysteria is a frequent occasion for the speed and frenzy, and LITTLE RURAL RIDING HOOD (1949) is probably the high point in Avery's manic sex cycle. Commenting at length on this frightening series, Joe Adamson offers an elegant description of a characteristic sequence in THE SHOOTING OF DAN MCGOO (1945)—a sequence, incidentally, that recalls some of the finer excesses in L'AGE D'OR:

"The 'lady that's known as Lou' gets introduced as the stripper sensation of the joint, and she does one rousing chorus of 'Put Your Arms Around Me, Wolfie, Hold Me Tight,' which rouses the wolf no end. His eyes burn straight through the menu in front of him, he smashes his head with a mallet and turns it into a Jack-in-the-Box, he kicks himself behind the ear as part of some perverse notion of a donkey imitation, he slams his head against a nearby post and in the excitement chomps away at the post as if it were a giant carrot, he beats his chair against the table, he picks the table up and beats it against the floor."[2]

On the other side of the coin is Avery's flair for ridiculous understatement. The typical utterances of his basset-hound Droopy are usually in this category, but my favorite example comes from his archrival in DRAGALONG DROOPY. While Droopy's herd of sheep move like a battalion of lawn mowers across the wilderness, devouring every spot of green in their path, the camera pans past them to a sign reading:

CATTLE COUNTRY
KEEP OUT
(THIS MEANS EWE);

then, while Scott Bradley supplies "Home on the Range," continues past an endless stretch of cows smothering the terrain, a crowded assembly of animals so vast that it makes the last shot of Hitchcock's THE BIRDS pale by comparison; finally arriving at the rancher sitting lazily on his front porch, surrounded by acres of beef, who turns to us casually and remarks: "Y'know—I raise cattle."

If the bulk of Avery's perpetual-motion machines tend to hold up well, this may be because, like the classics of Sennett and Keaton and Chaplin, they are usually irrelevant about everything *except* motion, and because their hysteria is often beautifully formalized (i.e., "orchestrated," syncopated, balanced, articulated as cleanly and clearly as notes in a scale). According to this latter criterion, I tend to prefer the cartoons that thematically and plastically take off in all directions—SCREWBALL SQUIRREL, LITTLE RURAL RIDING HOOD—to the ones that move relentlessly and predictably towards *reductio ad absurdum* conclusions, like KING SIZE CANARY and HALF-PINT PIGMY. A good example of relatively intricate but *un*predictable plotting is the hilarious ROCK-A-BYE BEAR (1952), even though it devotes its entire middle section—successfully—to variations of a single gag.

For anyone suffering from an overdose of Disney piety, one Avery cartoon a day is guaranteed to deliver immediate and lasting relief. Next to the usual sadomasochistic rituals of Tom and Jerry and the increasingly formularized progressions of a Road Runner, the best Avery efforts are explosions of maximal energy and ingenuity within a very confined space—familiar voices leading us, like the descriptions and dialogue in a Kafka tale, through impossible landscapes. ⁂

HECK ALLEN

After twelve on-and-off years as Tex Avery's story man at MGM, Heck Allen became a successful writer of Western fiction under the alternating pen names of Clay Fisher and Will Henry. He now has over thirty novels to his credit, including *No Survivors,* the first exposé of the Custer myth, and the books on which Raoul Walsh's THE TALL MEN and J. Lee Thompson's MACKENNA'S GOLD are based. This interview was held in all seriousness on April Fool's day, 1971. —Joe Adamson

HECK ALLEN: Tex never understood the quality and extent of his own genius. Otherwise he would have simply picked up his briefcase, gone up on the front lot, and said, "I'm Tex Avery. I can make the funniest goddamn live-action pictures you ever saw in your life, and we'll get rich together." But he never did. He is totally modest. The most unbelievable thing was that they didn't appreciate it, that they didn't snare him and elevate him to the papacy of humor on the front lot. The cartoon business is full of brilliant people like that who never get heard of. Their tragic flaw is that they're hung up on these goddamn little figures running around on that drawing board.

Tex was always totally in charge of anything he ever did. To this day, he works alone. He just doesn't want to argue with people. And I never argued with him. Well, how could you? I mean, you're sitting there knocked out on your chair, laughing your ass off all day long—you can't very well argue with a guy that's bringing tears to your eyes. I thought, and still think, that he's a genuine, native American genius. And he has done it all alone. He never had any help, as I see it.

Now Chuck Jones, I don't care how brilliant Chuck is—and I've heard enough times that he *is* brilliant—he didn't do it all by himself. He had, in this Mike Maltese, an extremely able gag man and a good story man. Tex never had anybody. He laid the pictures out for the goddamn background man; he did everything for the so-called character man, who draws the models of the characters; if we had three pages of dialogue, he would scratch it out with his lead pencil, and I'd take this stuff and translate it into English. But he did everything, including some of the voices.[1] He's really the original one-man band.

Tex was a bearcat for dialogue. God, he'd have twenty or thirty takes on a line. Hell, I couldn't tell one from the other. But Tex would eventually pick one, and I'd say, "Yeah! *Just* the one!"

Tex is a true, old-time Texas boy—a lineal blood descendant of Judge Roy Bean. I think Texas gives flavor to his humor. His stuff, and the style he set—which I'm convinced *he* set, and Jones and Freleng just followed—is earthy. What they're still doing with that damn Coyote and the Roadrunner, this is fundamental Tex Avery stuff.

I think Chuck Jones was a kind of split personality in that business. He was an intellectual in a non-intellectual business. I don't think either Tex or Friz Freleng would be called intellectuals. The people who built the cartoon empire are not often found with a higher educational background. So in that business, if you're an intellectual you don't really belong.

[1] Only upon questioning did Tex Avery admit that he is the voice of Junior (of George and Junior), and the very similar voice of Willoughby (the hunting dog in THE HECKLING HARE, THE CRACKPOT QUAIL, and OF FOX AND HOUNDS). At Warners, his voice pops up from time to time embodied in a hippo or walrus who laughs so hard he can hardly take his next breath. Avery also does the chuckle of the bulldog in BAD LUCK BLACKIE. For anyone who wants a clue to what Avery's voice really sounds like, there are the little *ouches* that come out of a bottle in DEPUTY DROOPY. —Joe Adamson

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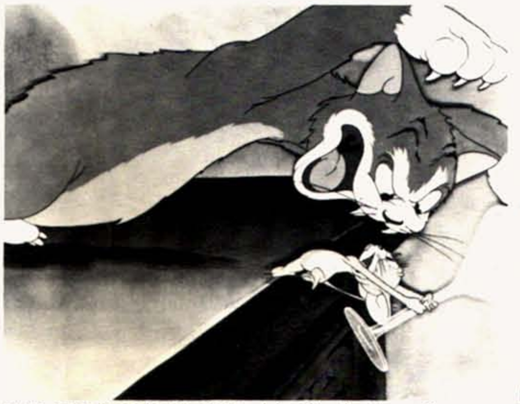
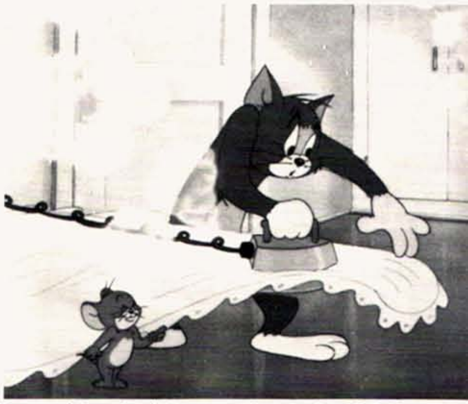
[2] "Tex Avery and the Pleasures of the Flesh," *Funnyworld* No. 15, Fall 1973.

TOM &

The cartoon animator is an artist, too.


PUSS GETS THE BOOT (1941): debut film for "Jasper" (Tom) and "Dat Mouse" (Jerry).


Tom and Jerry in their masterpiece, MOUSE CLEANING (1948).

Tom and Jerry started life in a short called PUSS GETS THE BOOT (1941), an MGM cartoon produced by Rudolf Ising. The directors, Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera, were uncredited and evidently this was their first attempt at directing a film together. PUSS GETS THE BOOT is a very slow cartoon in which the cat is called Jasper and the mouse is unnamed, although he was patterned after Rudy Ising's character Little Cheeser. The plot revolves around Mammy Two-Shoes and the disruption of her household by "dat mouse." Jasper is called upon to get rid of the mouse but is in the end tossed out on his ear (kicked, actually) when he fails to get his quarry. There is a series of gags concerning broken dishes that the mouse heaps upon Jasper's tousled head.

Jasper is a considerably more cat-like cat than Tom was to be later; his head has more space between the ears, and his teeth are smaller and sharper. There was more hair on his body and more "self lines" (color ink lines) separating the green around his pupils and the light gray marks between his eyes. The mouse's ears were larger and his belly more pronounced than the later Jerry, but he changed little over the years.

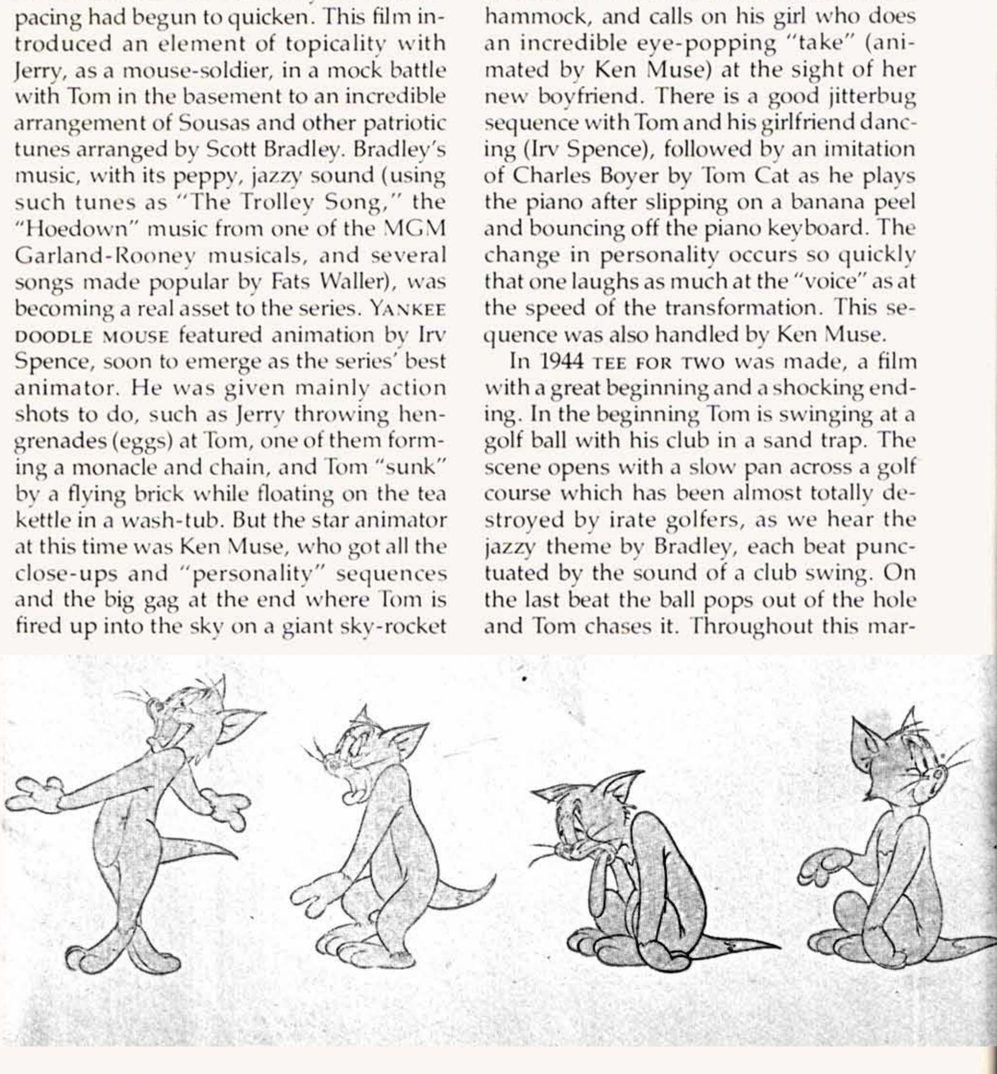
The cartoon was animated by Ising's staff of the time, Carl Urbono, Tony Pabian, Jack Zander, Pete Burness, and Bob Allen, who also directed for Rudy. This film owes a lot to Ising's timing style, which was better suited to fantasy than comedy. The early "Tom and Jerrys" suffer from too much detail and slow timing and did not improve noticeably until 1944. Bill Hanna was directing "Captain and the Kids" cartoons on the MGM lot and Joe Barbera was a story man, out from Van Buren's in New York, where he had been a gag man. Barbera had had something to do with the making of Van Buren's "Tom and Jerry" series (Tom was a tall dark man and Jerry was a short blond man), and it was probably Barbera who used the names for the cat and mouse characters. Their first picture was quite successful; it was held over at some theaters for as long as six weeks.

The second picture, THE MIDNIGHT SNACK, was almost a paraphrase of the first, with Tom getting the "boot" at the end by Mammy Two-Shoes (so named because her face was never shown: only shots from the mid-shoulders down, except in the 1945 PART-TIME PAL, when Mike Lah accidently brought her head down into the frame for a couple of feet during the chase sequence). The third film, THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, introduced an element of pathos into the series which Hanna and Barbera were never to repeat. Tom takes pity on Jerry after he throws him out into the snow on Christmas eve and thaws him out. The animation at this point in the series was highlighted by the close-ups of Ken Muse and the action sequences of Jack Zander and Pete Burness, among others.

By 1942, when YANKEE DOODLE MOUSE won the series' first Academy Award, the pacing had begun to quicken. This film introduced an element of topicality with Jerry, as a mouse-soldier, in a mock battle with Tom in the basement to an incredible arrangement of Sousas and other patriotic tunes arranged by Scott Bradley. Bradley's music, with its peppy, jazzy sound (using such tunes as "The Trolley Song," the "Hoedown" music from one of the MGM Garland-Rooney musicals, and several songs made popular by Fats Waller), was becoming a real asset to the series. YANKEE DOODLE MOUSE featured animation by Irv Spence, soon to emerge as the series' best animator. He was given mainly action shots to do, such as Jerry throwing hen-grenades (eggs) at Tom, one of them forming a monacle and chain, and Tom "sunk" by a flying brick while floating on the tea kettle in a wash-tub. But the star animator at this time was Ken Muse, who got all the close-ups and "personality" sequences and the big gag at the end where Tom is fired up into the sky on a giant sky-rocket and bursts into a multi-colored American flag.

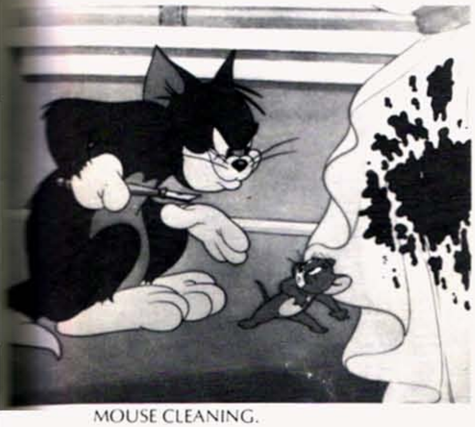
In THE ZOOT CAT, another hilarious entry in 1943, Tom wears a zoot suit, cut from a hammock, and calls on his girl who does an incredible eye-popping "take" (animated by Ken Muse) at the sight of her new boyfriend. There is a good jitterbug sequence with Tom and his girlfriend dancing (Irv Spence), followed by an imitation of Charles Boyer by Tom Cat as he plays the piano after slipping on a banana peel and bouncing off the piano keyboard. The change in personality occurs so quickly that one laughs as much at the "voice" as at the speed of the transformation. This sequence was also handled by Ken Muse.

In 1944 TEE FOR TWO was made, a film with a great beginning and a shocking ending. In the beginning Tom is swinging at a golf ball with his club in a sand trap. The scene opens with a slow pan across a golf course which has been almost totally destroyed by irate golfers, as we hear the jazzy theme by Bradley, each beat punctuated by the sound of a club swing. On the last beat the ball pops out of the hole and Tom chases it. Throughout this mar-

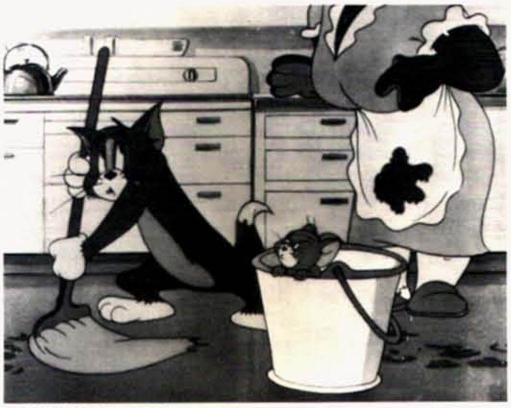


JERRY

by Mark Kausler



MOUSE CLEANING.



MOUSE CLEANING.

ALL PHOTOS: MARK KAUSLER

velous scene (Irv Spence), the excitement of the music and the ferocity of Tom's club swinging promise much. The film rambles along, with Jerry being washed in a golfball cleaner, a golf ball going through Tom's teeth, and a woodpecker pecking the golf balls to pieces.

In the next-to-last gag, Tom is chasing Jerry, who launches a line of angry bees after the cat, who dives into a water hazard, breathing through a tube. Jerry puts a funnel on top of Tom's breathing tube and whistles to the bees to fly down the tube. They do so, and we wait for a breathless moment as the camera trucks back from the water to a longer shot showing the entire hole. Then after we have waited *just* long enough, *all* the water in the hole *flies* up in the air, and there is the most terrifying drawing (Ken Muse) of Tom being stung in his wide open mouth and throat by the angry bees, accompanied by the most anguished scream ever put on film. The scene sounds horribly painful when described, but to see it is to laugh; it really works, so that one laughs all through the last gag, which is not as funny as the bee gag.

This is followed by a marvelous sequence in which Tom runs with the ink-stained curtain to the washing machine, dunks it in, puts it through the wringer, irons it, and hangs it back up, never once stopping his running action, his legs like an egg-beater. This is one of the best examples of an action at which Spence excelled: keeping the character moving all the time he is doing something, sort of "running in the air."

After Tom rests from his curtain adventure—and what a rest! his tongue hangs almost to the floor as he pants—he looks off to stage right and does a "take." Jerry is up to his messy tricks again, this time juggling eggs in the kitchen. Tom looks worried as he tries to keep the eggs from falling to the floor; then Jerry throws them off-screen, Tom runs to catch them and then starts juggling them to avoid dropping them. Jerry throws a spoon and a pie in the air, and Tom catches them on his nose; then Jerry pulls the rug out from under Tom's feet and all the stuff goes flying through the air. Tom zips out and back in again with an egg carton and catches all the eggs before they can hit the ground—but forgets the pie, which falls on top of his head. This sequence was animated by Ken Muse, who was especially good at defining Tom and Jerry's personalities, with a great deal of attention paid to the *expressions* on their faces.

Then there is a scene animated by Ed Barge where Jerry opens the front door of the house and an old junk-wagon horse walks in. Tom runs in and makes a long skidding run in anticipation of grabbing the horse and heaving him through the door. We really feel the horse's weight in this scene; Tom's legs scramble and he doesn't make much headway as he tries to run carrying the horse. It was Barge's hallmark to give *weight* and *solidity* to the characters; one gets an extraordinary sensation of volume and a three-dimensional quality in his animation.

The next sequence (animated by Ken Muse) shows Jerry pressing a stamp pad filled with ink onto Tom's feet, then snapping the pad on his nose, causing Tom to chase Jerry all over the house (off-screen). When Tom turns around, he gasps at the ink footprints all over the walls, chairs, floor, and ceiling. He then picks up Jerry and throws him into the basement. Jerry hears the coal truck chute slide into the basement window and ties the chute with a rope and hoists it up to the living room window. Meanwhile, Tom has been frantically trying to clean up the house before Mammy Two-Shoes gets home. He finishes, throws the cleaning things behind the couch, and innocently folds his hands and waits for her. The coal chute is just outside the window near where Tom is sitting. The coal spills into the house and carries Tom away with it. (Ed Barge's animation of the coal pouring in is amazingly detailed; one can almost feel every lump.)

From 1941 to 1945 the comedy in the "Tom and Jerry" cartoons improved. Whether or not the fast, fast gags of Tex Avery's cartoons of the same period were an influence is not known. There is little direct stealing, but the wildness of the "takes," and the quality and humor of the extreme drawings, are certainly "improved by association." Then in 1945 Irv Spence left the MGM Cartoon Department to work for John Sutherland Productions on industrial cartoons. He was replaced on the series by Michael Lah, a good action animator, but whose drawings lacked Spence's cartoony flair. Some of Lah's best animation was on such cartoons as PART-TIME PAL and TRAP HAPPY. Irv Spence came back in 1946 on the picture SPRINGTIME FOR THOMAS (for which he received no screen credit). Here he animated an incredible chase and fight sequence, during which Tom drinks all the water out of a swimming pool, gets socked with a playground swing, and is roasted on a barbeque spit—all in the name of love. Mike Lah subsequently worked for

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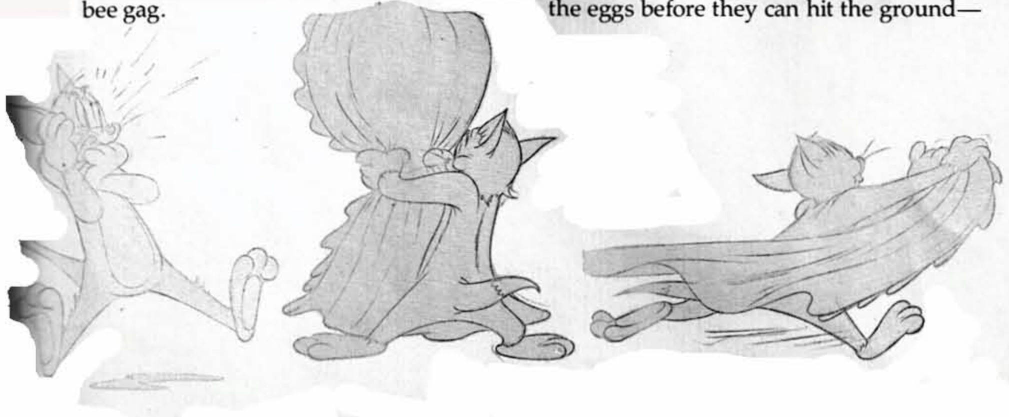
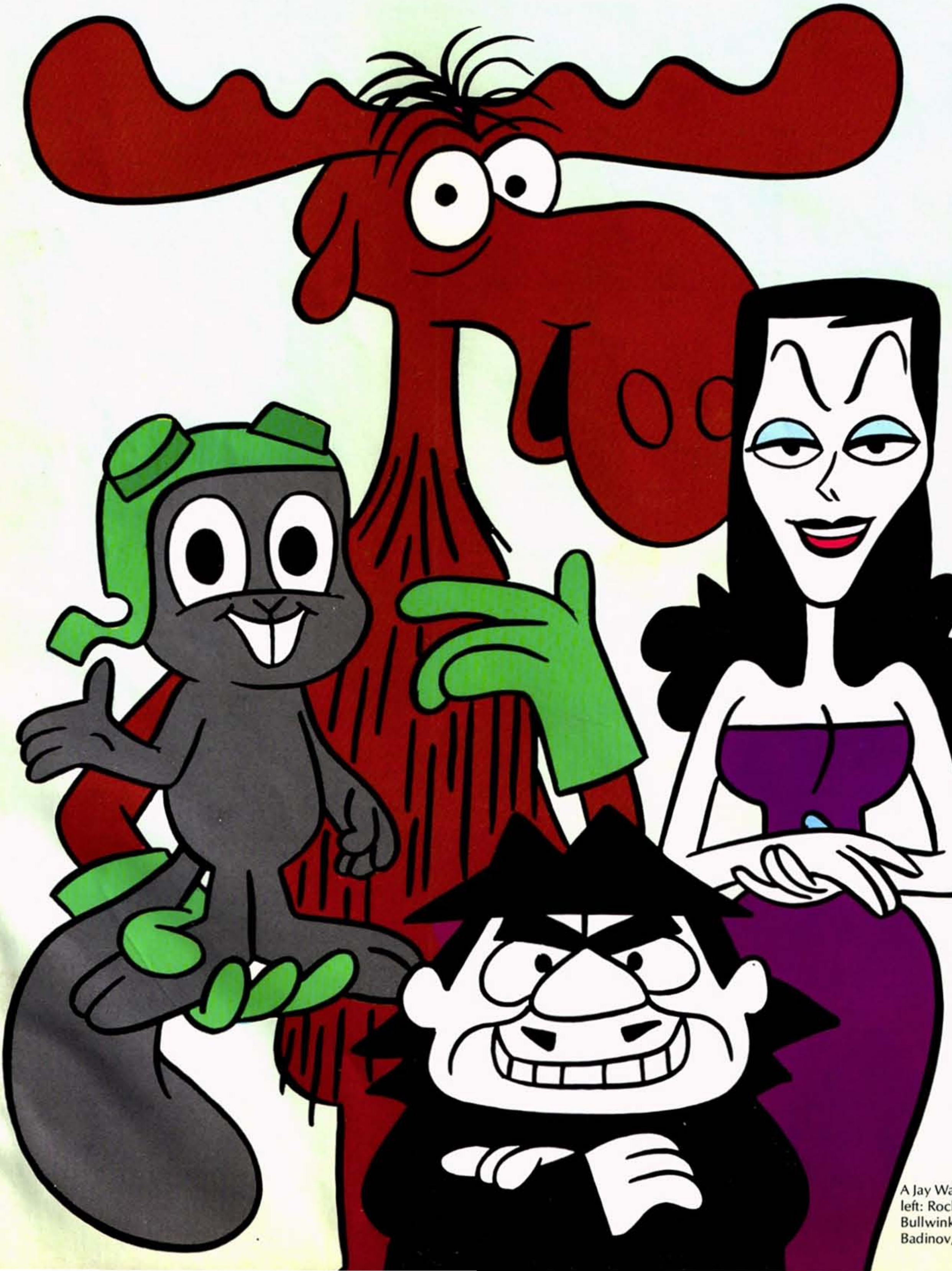


TV ANIMATION

The decline and pratfall of a popular art

by Leonard Maltin



A Jay Ward family portrait. From left: Rocket J. Squirrel, Bullwinkle Moose, Boris Badinov, Natasha Fatale.

Television cartoon series are the Muzak of animation. There's nothing jarringly *wrong* with that tirelessly uninteresting music one hears in restaurants, airport lounges, and elevators; the musicians play the proper notes at the proper time. But there's nothing particularly *right* with Muzak either, which is part of its design: to provide businesses with innocuous background music that helps submerge (or camouflage) the sounds of regular operations.

The essential difference between Muzak and TV cartoons is the difference between a subconscious massage and an insistent assault of mediocrity. Whereas Muzak is intentionally bland, the cartoons produced by Hanna-Barbera and their legion of imitators are consciously bad: assembly-line shorts grudgingly executed by cartoon veterans who hate what they're doing. Most serious of all, perhaps, is its effect on the audience: no one actually *listens* to Muzak, but millions of children eagerly await new episodes of *Magilla Gorilla* and *The Jackson Five*.

What's missing here is not money but imagination. To criticize Hanna-Barbera because their cartoons look cheap is beside the point. Winsor McCay's 1914 GERTIE THE DINOSAUR looks better—and *is* better—than Hanna-Barbera's product, even though this black-and-white silent film is composed entirely of line drawings with simple backgrounds. The difference is elementary: McCay made his cartoons with wit and care, and all the technique or money in the world cannot replace those commodities. Indeed, the *Bullwinkle* cartoons from Jay Ward Studios represent the apex of corner-cutting, but no one cares, because they *flaunt* their cheapness, and substitute verbal imagination for visual ingenuity. The cartoon scripts are so funny that one is willing to forgive their ragged execution.

When television became a fixture in most American homes during the Fifties, the Hollywood cartoon studios were still at work producing a regular quota for theatrical distribution. In 1953, for example, Disney released fifteen cartoons, including the featurette BEN AND ME; the Academy Award-winning CinemaScope, Stereophonic-sound TOOT, WHISTLE, PLUNK, AND BOOM, a successful departure into stylized animation; two cartoons in the new 3D process; and the last Mickey Mouse short, THE SIMPLE THINGS. MGM produced fifteen shorts, including Hanna and Barbera's popular "Tom and Jerry" series, and Tex Avery's wildly inventive films like TV OF TOMORROW. Paramount had eight new Popeye titles, seven with Casper the Friendly Ghost, and fourteen other animated reels. 20th Century-Fox distributed thirty new titles from Paul Terry's Terrytoons unit featuring such continuing characters as Mighty Mouse. Universal released thirteen Walter Lantz products with Woody Woodpecker and friends. Warner Brothers had thirty new Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies directed by Friz Freleng, Chuck Jones, and Robert McKimson. Columbia released ten new shorts from the youngest of the cartoon companies, UPA, including four with Mister Magoo. Not counting one-shots and independent releases, this accounts for well over one hundred new theatrical cartoons in the year 1953.

By this time, television was beginning to have serious effects on the movie industry. Short subjects had already begun a slow death because of double-features, changing distribution patterns (including the end of block-booking that forced theaters to take a studio's shorts), and the competition of similar material on the home screen. But cartoons were still in demand, and still essentially the domain of the movie companies. Animation was thought too expensive to be feasible for TV.[1]

Meanwhile, studios were jealously guarding their film backlog, refusing to compete with themselves by selling their most valuable properties to television. The first cartoons to appear on TV were old silent shorts and Thirties efforts from independent studios such as Van Beuren, Ub Iwerks, and Charles Mintz. Around 1957, the dam burst, with several studios consummating major television deals for their feature films and cartoons. Soon the daytime hours on TV were filled with Bugs Bunny, Popeye, Betty Boop, and other cartoon stars enjoying a new lease on life.

The TV sale marked the end of Popeye's theatrical career of thirty-four years, although Paramount continued to make other theatrical cartoons, and always kept a handful of Popeyes in re-release. These TV deals did not curtail production at other studios—with one notable exception. In the spring of 1957, Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera were twenty-year veterans with the MGM cartoon department, having been promoted to heads of production when long-time producer Fred Quimby retired. Then one morning the telephone rang. "We were told to discontinue production and lay off the entire staff. Twenty years of work suddenly ended with a single phone call," they later recalled.

The two men had become co-directors on the long-running "Tom and Jerry" series at MGM, creating slick, entertaining cartoons which explored new avenues of comic violence, solidified the cat-and-mouse cartoon formula, and maintained one trademark—neither character spoke (pre-dating Chuck Jones' "Roadrunner" cartoons, which have been credited with innovating these same ideas). The series racked up an amazing seven Academy Awards in the Forties and early Fifties.

Suddenly unemployed, Hanna and Barbera developed a proposal for what they called "planned animation" to gear cartoon-making for television budgets. MGM told them there was no future in cartoons for TV, and other executives expressed similar disinterest. Then George Sidney, who had worked with the team on the now-classic sequence in ANCHORS AWEIGH where Gene Kelly dances with Jerry Mouse, got them an entree at Columbia and a deal with the studio's television subsidiary, Screen Gems. Their first product was a series of cartoons called *Ruff and Reddy* which sold to NBC for inclusion in a Saturday morning show with a live host.[2]

In 1959, Hanna-Barbera unveiled their completely animated half-hour show, *Huckleberry Hound*. This syndicated program was a tremendous success, and introduced a likable character named Yogi Bear who soon became the star of his own half-hour program. To this youngster, *Huckleberry Hound* was a most entertaining show, but even then it was clear that the principal appeal of its characters was their voices. Using such expert vocal talents as Daws Butler, the studio gave its characters highly individual and amusing voices, whose similarity to those of famous comedians fell just short of plagiarism: Snagglepuss was Bert Lahr, Doggie Daddy was Jimmy Durante, etc.

As Hanna-Barbera's output increased, however, even a ten-year-old began to recognize (and tire of) the repetition in each show: the same canned music, the same gags, the same sound-effects and gimmicks, and the same characters, only in different guises. The Hanna-Barbera format of a tall hero and a short sidekick quickly wore out its welcome; and after Yogi Bear and Boo-Boo, Quick Draw McGraw and Baba Looie, Lippy de Lion and Hardy Har Har, Peter Potamus, Wally Gator, and all the others had presented themselves for approval, this viewer switched the channel to return to Bugs Bunny.

Hanna-Barbera's biggest problem was mass production. At MGM the duo produced about fifty minutes of film a year; at their new studio the quota became over an hour a week! How was it possible to turn out so much animation so quickly? The essence of "planned animation" was reducing movement to an absolute minimum. Bill Hanna once explained for

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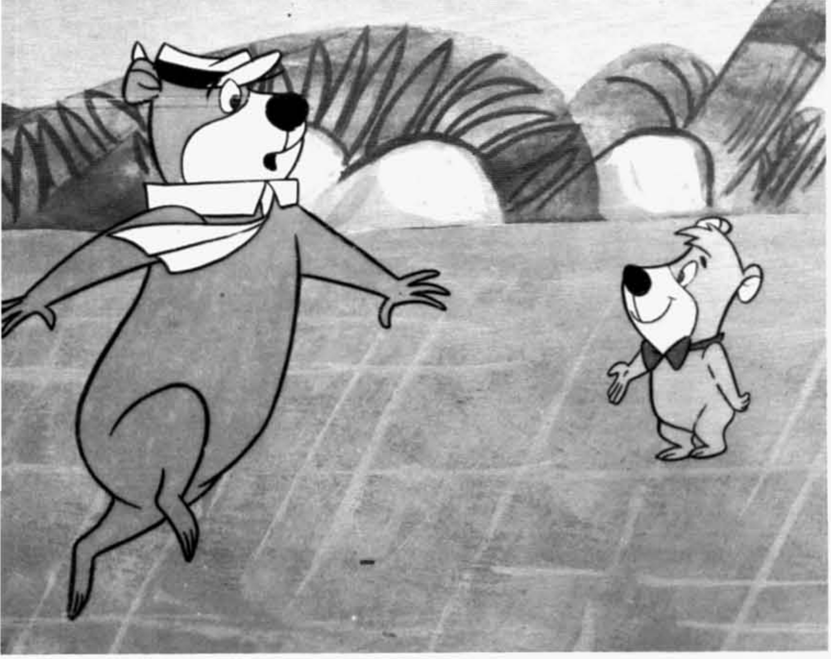
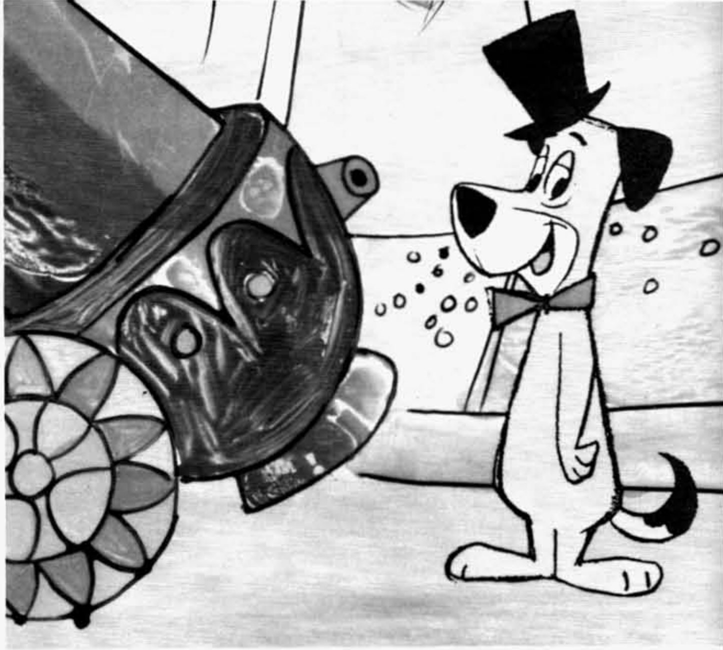
[1] In the wake of UPA's success with stylized animation, most of the major Hollywood cartoon studios did assimilate some of that company's cost-cutting ideas, retaining full animation in terms of character movement and such, but incorporating increasingly impressionistic backgrounds and layouts, instead of the finely detailed landscapes and foliage that had always populated such cartoons.

[2] This was not the first made-for-TV cartoon. Other independent producers had developed cartoon series with varying degrees of success. At one end of the spectrum was a "cheater" series of filmed comic strips, while at the other end was the successful syndicated series *Crusader Rabbit*, which employed the talents of one Jay Ward. But Hanna-Barbera were the first to make a major dent in this area.



Hanna-Barbera's Yogi Bear and Boo-Boo.



Hanna Barbera's Huckleberry Hound.

TV ANIMATIONS CONTINUED

reporter Digby Diehl: "Disney-type full animation is economically unfeasible for television, and we discovered that we could get away with less .... The old theatrical cartoons kept characters moving constantly—no holds, no heavy accents. Free-flowing stuff is harder to watch because of all that tedious detail."

"Tedious detail" would include such niceties as Wile E. Coyote's pupils dilating as he senses that a gigantic boulder is about to crush him, or Bugs Bunny wriggling his eyebrows at the audience in anticipation of a trick he's about to pull on Elmer Fudd. "Keeping characters moving constantly" was more a matter of keeping characters moving according to their personality. Bugs' walk is different from Tweetie Pie's; Popeye's is different from Mister Magoo's.[3] In Hanna-Barbera cartoons, there are no nuances in the design or movement of characters' faces; wriggling an eyebrow would probably throw off the budget for an entire series. What's more, Yogi Bear walks the same way as Ranger Smith, who walks the same way as Magilla Gorilla, who . . .

All of the action in a Hanna-Barbera cartoon takes place on the same plane. There is no such thing as moving toward or away from the camera (except, notably, in the main titles for a series, where the animators could splurge). A critic once wrote that DUMBO had "as many camera angles as CITIZEN KANE," while Bob Clampett delighted in having his Looney Tunes characters run amok inside the cartoon frame, dashing away into the background only to scramble frantically right into the camera lens a moment later. One will never find such movement in a Hanna-Barbera cartoon; working out the perspective detail would take too long, and besides, what purpose would it serve?

When one reads Bill Hanna's comment that planned animation was largely a matter of "getting away with less," it is mind-boggling to think what the credo must have been at Max Fleischer's studio in the early Thirties, when director Dave Fleischer and his animators seemed to be trying to see how *much* they could cram into every frame. In the classic Betty Boop SNOW WHITE, it isn't enough that icicles come to life to herald Betty's arrival at the castle, while Bimbo and Ko-Ko literally pop out of their suits of armor; after Betty steps over a suit of flannel underwear substituting for red carpet, a tiny mouse peeks out from under the flannel flap and squeaks, "Hello, Betty!" This is not designed as a major gag in the film; it is merely a throwaway in a scene already brimming with movement and humor. Fleischer cartoons of this period are overflowing with ideas, just as Disney's Mickey Mouse shorts of the early Thirties piled gag upon gag at a breathless rate.

One of the treats of vintage Hollywood cartoons is the fine music on the soundtrack. The major unsung hero in this field is Carl W. Stalling, who composed an original score for every Warner Brothers cartoon, combining popular songs, classical themes, and original ideas in order to complement and enhance the visual humor. Many cartoons, from Disney's THE BAND CONCERT to Friz Freleng's RHAPSODY IN RIVETS and Walter Lantz's "Swing Symphonies"—and even Hanna-Barbera's own Tom and Jerry CAT CONCERTO—were built entirely around famous pieces of classical music. The most familiar music on the soundtracks of Hanna-Barbera TV cartoons is the same canned theme used for years on Listerine commercials.

Finally, the great vintage Hollywood cartoons were quality products, made by men who cared, and aimed at adults as well as children. Quality was evident in the drawing, the backgrounds, the level of humor, the topicality, the use of good music—in every aspect of creating the finished product. The youngster watching these cartoons on television grew up with an attendant sense of quality; they developed his sense of humor, his ear for music (how many kids were introduced by cartoons to the *Hungarian Rhapsody* or the theme from *Barber of Seville*?), and even his sense of history in deciphering or asking about once-topical gags. What can the Hanna-Barbera cartoons offer a child except a baby-sitting service?

Adding salt to the wound, many people fear that a steady diet of these cartoons will dictate future evaluations of quality. Disney veteran Ward Kimball told Mike Barrier in an inteview why he edited scenes out of THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE and THE BAND CONCERT when the classic cartoons were shown during a Mickey Mouse anniversary program on the Sunday night Disney TV show. "The Hanna-Barbera Saturday morning fare . . . has conditioned kids to expect this kind of quick timing. Do away with all the dissolves and fades and all the artwork we used to throw into our cartoons. Communication has to be sudden and quick now."

This paints a sad picture indeed, especially when one sees other successful cartoon studios like Filmation and DePatie-Freleng following in Hanna-Barbera's footsteps. (At least DePatie-Freleng's Pink Panther character has some subtlety in his movement and design; but their Saturday morning show now has a laugh-track to tell the kids when to be amused.)

The question remains, does it have to be this way?

The dual obstacles to quality are money and time. As with live programs on TV, even creative talents are bound to wear

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[3] Cf. Grim Natwick's "Advice from a Master," on page

themselves out on a weekly grind. But the true irony is in the contrast between the problems of producing animated programming and creating animated commercials. This too is identical to the live-action world: more time, money, and creativity is poured into the making of a one-minute commercial than is used for the production of a half-hour show. Thus, some of the best animation on TV is in commercials. Quality animation is also found on the two Public Broadcasting shows *Sesame Street* and *Electric Company*, which commission short animated sequences from small, creative animation houses. These segments, designed to impress the meaning of certain letters or numbers on young children, not only inspire but *demand* ingenuity on the part of the filmmakers, unlike the cartoons-for-cartoons'-sake that fill the commercial airwaves.

Time restrictions are difficult to surmount, but the money factor is not so one-sided. A few individuals have shown that cheap animation need not be tiresome (as in the deceptively simple styles employed on *Sesame Street* and in many commercials). Animator-director Gene Deitch created the Tom Terrific character for Terrytoons' use on *Captain Kangaroo*, and turned his limitations into an asset. These cartoons use line drawings for all characters, and sparse, impressionistic backgrounds to suggest a city street, a playground, or an ocean. The major asset of hero Tom Terrific is that he can turn himself into any kind of object at whim; thus, the keystone of the series is a purely *visual* idea. Clever direction, endearing tongue-in-cheek voice work, and a serviceable music score using just an accordian add up to a pleasing and entertaining cartoon with more verve and innovation than most TV outings—on a small budget.

Of course, Deitch's graphic format for *Tom Terrific* was merely an extension of the style made famous by UPA in the late Forties and early Fifties (Deitch was UPA's New York chief before joining Terrytoons). At that time, such cartoons as GERALD MCBOING BOING, MADELEINE, and the "Mister Magoo" series were considered revolutionary in their stylized approach. Critics hailed the studio product as a refreshing change from the so-called literalism of Disney, while Disney answered back with some limited-animation endeavors like TOOT, WHISTLE, PLUNK, AND BOOM and PIGS IS PIGS, scoring on the same ground as UPA but making it clear that this was a device to be used for special occasions, and not a way of life. Similarly, UPA discovered that this unique style of designing cartoons was not appropriate for every kind of subject. Moreover, an attempt to duplicate the success of the classic GERALD MCBOING BOING revealed that even brilliant designers, directors, and animators were lost without an idea worth developing; most of the "McBoing Boing" sequels were lifeless examples of form without content.

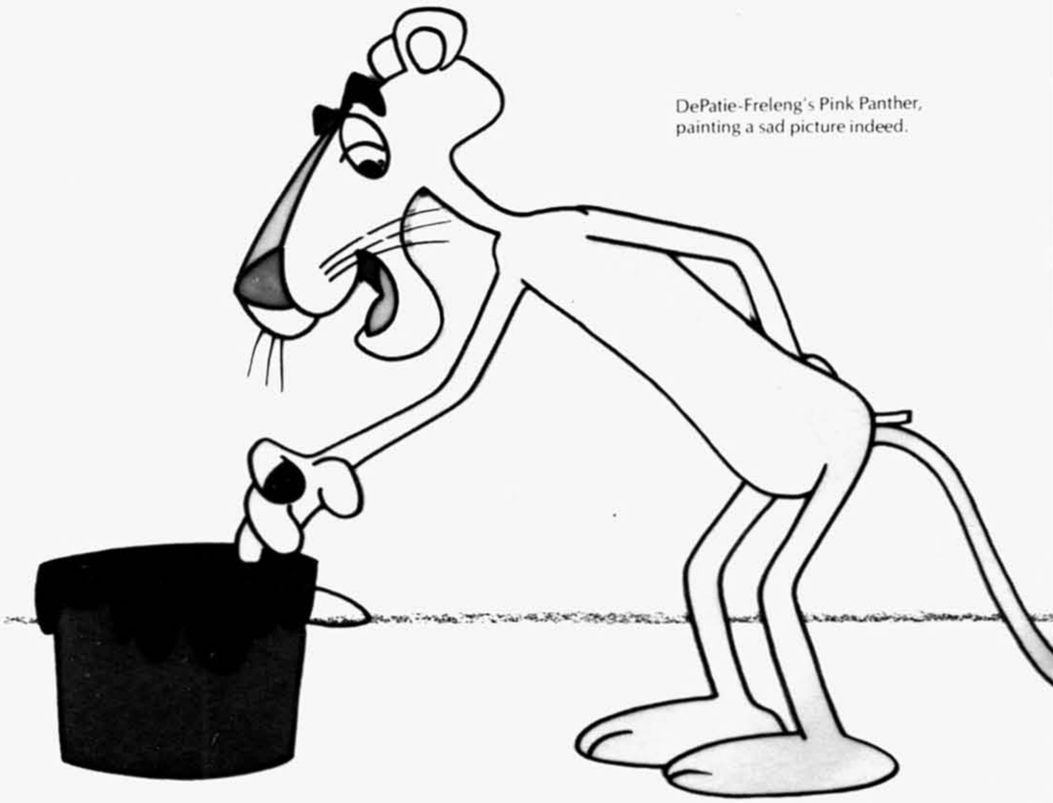
Ironically, an early Fifties UPA cartoon like the Magoo SLOPPY JALOPY seems positively lavish today when compared to standard TV fare, including the cartoons produced by the very same UPA in recent years. After a series of funny and well-made Magoo shorts for theatrical release, the company (with few of its stalwarts still on the staff) produced a series of a hundred and fifty five-minute "Magoos" for TV using Hanna-Barbera techniques, with predictably bleak results. The studio fared better with half-hour and hour-long Magoo specials, and a series of *Dick Tracy* TV cartoons spiced with a gallery of colorful characters.

A few UPA veterans (director Pete Burness, designer-director Bill Hurtz, writer Bill Scott) teamed up with producer Jay Ward in the late Fifties to create *Rocky and His Friends*, a limited-animation half-hour with a difference: humor. Combining sharp comedy writing with a general air of irreverence (Rocky and Bullwinkle frequently talk back to the narrator of their adventures) and a sterling cast of voice players, *Rocky* soon earned as big an adult following as it had among the smallfry set. *The Bullwinkle Show* was an extension of *Rocky's* format, but when originally broadcast on NBC early Sunday evenings, a Bullwinkle puppet m.c. got too pointed in his satiric barbs at the network and the program returned to full animation, in which the network brass felt the same kind of satire was less threatening, since fewer people would tend to take a cartoon seriously.

Only on the *Rocky* show would a fairy tale involving a group of mice in an old shoe contain the following passage: the head mouse warns his friends that they may be dispossessed, but they have nowhere to go. Another mouse asks, "What about Disneyland?" "Nah," replies the leader, "Cousin Mickey's got that place all sewed up," pointing to a painting of MM on the wall (from the waist down).

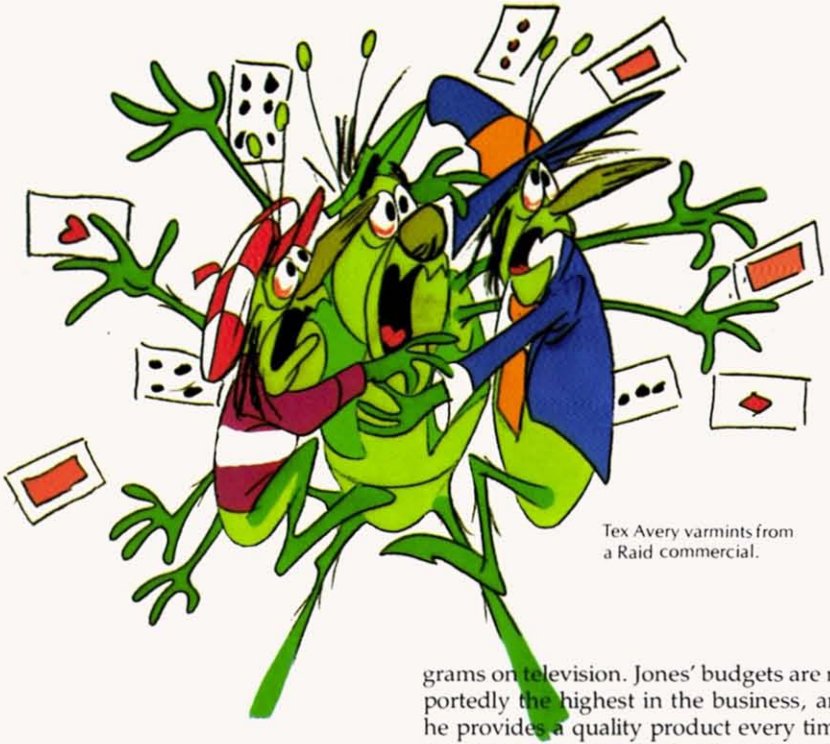
The animation in these high-spirited cartoons is sometimes downright inept, with no continuity from one shot to the next. But in addition to the irresistible humor on the soundtrack, Ward and crew had learned an important ingredient for making funny cartoons: design funny-looking characters. Thus, Ward's "cast" is the weirdest looking bunch since Max Fleischer's menagerie of the early Thirties, where being cross-eyed was the norm. And happily, they have voices to match, with Bullwinkle's dialogue spoken by Ward's co-producer Bill Scott.

The story of Jay Ward Productions is, sadly, laced with the bitter irony of television reality. Ward hasn't had a new show on TV since *George of the Jungle* several years ago, because he refuses to be trendy and give the networks the pablum they want for weekend mornings. Instead, he has spent most of his time the past few years producing commericals for Quaker Oats cereals featuring Cap'n Crunch and a cast of characters no less endearing than the loonies who populated his half-hour programs. Quaker has given Ward amazing freedom in the creation of these one-minute spots, and needless to say, enough



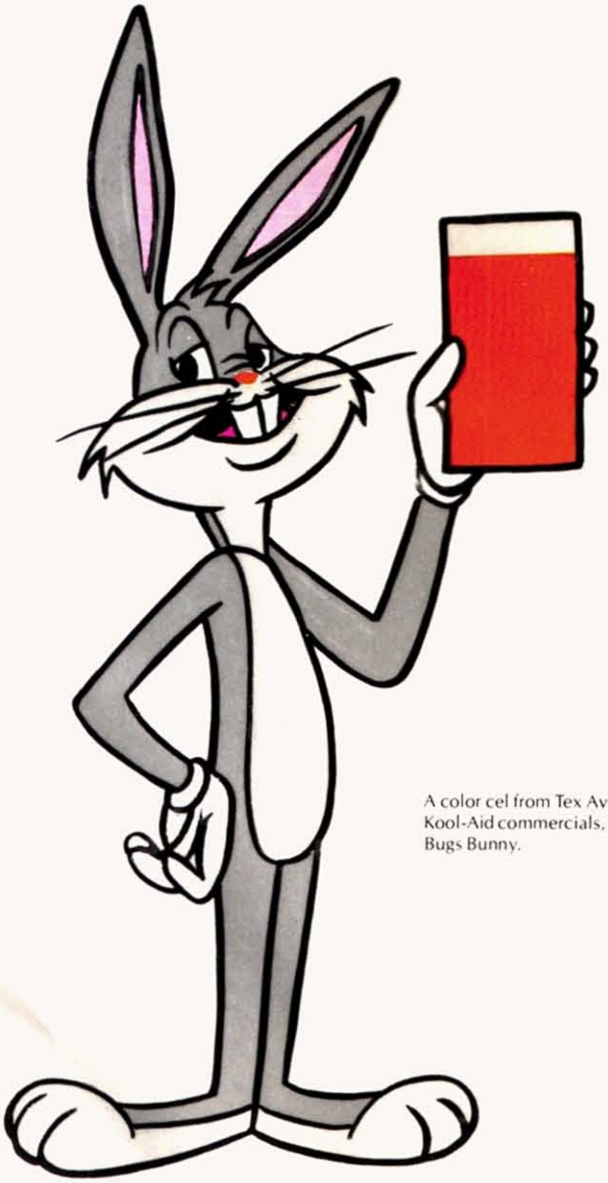
DePatie-Freleng's Pink Panther, painting a sad picture indeed.

money for him to turn out a finished product much handsomer than any of his shows ever were! The studio is able to do pencil-test dry runs for these commercials, a luxury it could not afford under network budgets and time restrictions; and all of the work for these commercials is done in-house under the supervision of Bill Hurtz, unlike most of the half-hour shows, where animation was farmed out to low-quality Mexican studios to save money. Needless to say, the Cap'n Crunch commericals are better in every way than most of the shows they interrupt.



Tex Avery varmints from a Raid commercial.

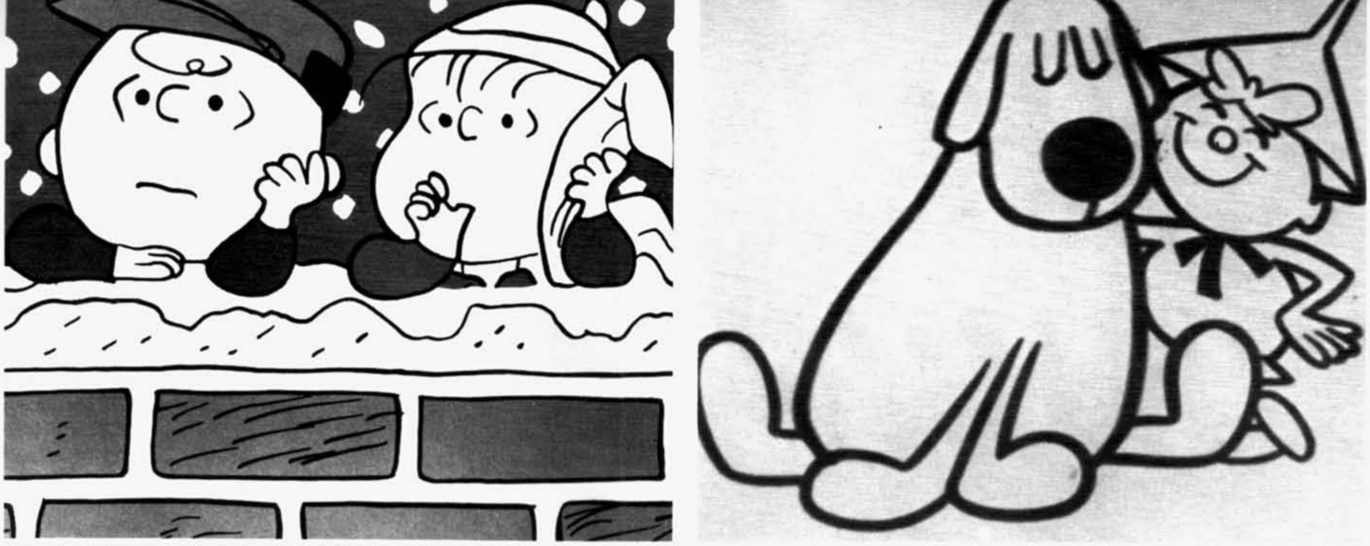
Ward is not the only producer capable of creating good cartoons for television. But the fact remains that in terms of entertainment and humor, no one has come close to his track-record. Chuck Jones' half-hour specials (HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS, THE CRICKET IN TIMES SQUARE, etc.) are perhaps the best-*animated* programs on television. Jones' budgets are reportedly the highest in the business, and he provides a quality product every time. But these shows, whether based on Dr. Seuss or conceived as original stories, tend to be terribly "cute" and self-conscious. Jones is a master of personality animation, but the personality he seems to favor is that of Sniffles, his first cartoon star back at Warner Brothers. Without writer Michael Maltese to provide brash, violent gags for characters like Bugs Bunny and Wile E. Coyote, Jones has reverted to his own, more personal style, which is far more limited in appeal and more difficult to sustain over thirty minutes' time. One can only wish that Jones would take his skill (and television clout) and find some way to rejuvenate Bugs and the Warners cartoon gang for TV.



A color cel from Tex Avery's Kool-Aid commercials, featuring Bugs Bunny.

Lee Mendelsohn and Bill Melendez's *Peanuts* half-hour specials are generally well done, although severely restricted by the graphic aridity of the Charles Schulz comic strip. But perhaps the two-dimensional nature of the characters is essential to *Peanuts'* appeal: one permits the suspension of disbelief in order to accept such unusual looking "children" who speak like mature adults; adding a third dimension, and asking us then to believe in these characters, would be an unbearable strain on all of us. The *Peanuts* programs largely overcame this dilemma, and found voices that suited the characters, but one insuperable problem remains: stretching a four-panel strip to half-hour length without letting the seams show.

Bob Clampett, another Warners graduate, temporarily abandoned animation in the early days of TV to create the popular children's puppet show *Time for Beany*. Some years later, he revived these characters in a series of half-hour cartoon programs called *Beany and Cecil*, starring Cecil the Sea-Sick Sea Serpent, his pal Beany, the villainous Dishonest John, and



Left: Charlie Brown and Linus in the Mendelsohn-Melendez PEANUTS. Right: Tom Terrfic, with Mighty Manfred the Wonder Dog, by Gene Deitch.

a rotating cast of assorted friends. The *Beany* cartoons are full of clever gag-writing, heavy on the puns, and the kind of adult references that gave *Bullwinkle* its wide appeal. There is also a healthy supply of visual imagination at work, and a surprising amount of original music for various episodes. Yet somehow, *Beany* doesn't work as well as one would like; it produces smiles, not laughs, because everything going on in the program is so blatantly self-conscious. Even the star character, Cecil, is one step removed from credibility: he's supposed to be a hand puppet, so one never sees the lower portion of his body, just a long neck leading (one supposes) to the arm of a puppeteer—as it in fact does during the main title of each show, revealing Bob Clampett as the man behind the scenes.

The *Beany* staff included such brilliant cartoon directors as Jack Hannah and Jack Kinney, responsible for the best Disney shorts of the Forties. But Cecil is not as funny (nor as flexible) a character as Goofy, and Dishonest John's villainy becomes monotonous in a way Donald Duck's temper tantrums seldom did. What's more, Clampett couldn't provide the budgets that Disney lavished on his cartoons; without the ability to move characters around constantly, enjoy the liberty of cutting and camera angles, and devote enough time to one brief episode to make it work just right, even the best animation men found themselves unfairly confined. Like Jones, Clampett has never topped the work he did while at Warner Brothers in the Forties.

Tex Avery has managed to continue making quality animation—in commercials. His long-running series of spots for Raid insecticide (produced more recently by another veteran, Jack Zander) with the spray mist turning into various instruments of death for perennially hapless insects, showed the kind of visual imagination missing from so many TV cartoons. Ironically enough, Avery animated Bugs Bunny for a series of Kool-Aid commercials in the Sixties, some twenty years after he helped to create the character at Warners.

Even Max Fleischer found himself associated with television, supervising an updated version of *Out of the Inkwell* in the Sixties that in total couldn't compare to the fluid animation and florid invention of *one* ten-minute "Inkwell" film made in 1921. As for the basic idea of combining live-action and animation, this was just too time-consuming for a series of mass-produced cartoons, so the inkwell gimmick was limited to Ko-Ko's entrance and exit in most five-minutes entries.

Oddly enough, one of animation's most successful and least innovative veterans, Walter Lantz, never got into television animation per se. Instead, he created a half-hour *Woody Woodpecker Show* by stringing together old theatrical cartoons with newly-animated introductions and, best of all, live-action segments in which he explained how cartoons were made. Although he lacked the likable folksiness of Walt Disney, Lantz did a fine job on these sequences, building the perfect framework in which to show his cartoons, introduced each week by Woody, proclaiming, "Here's my boss, Walter Lantz." As it happens, his cartoons, which almost always looked tacky in theaters, came off beautifully on television, because even these lower-budgeted efforts were better made than most of the made-for-TV competition. And like every cartoon studio, Lantz's had a full orchestra playing original scores for his shorts, an all-important factor in comparing theatrical and television animation.

A pioneer of a later generation, John Hubley, has refused to compromise with television, so his work in that medium has been sparse. The UPA veteran and creator of Mr. Magoo is probably best remembered by children of the TV era as the creator of the Marky Maypo commercials, rendered in the same visual and aural style as his more prestigious theatrical films MOONBIRD and THE HOLE, but no less entertaining. A few years ago the Hubley studio, run by John and his wife Faith, did land a steady assignment, producing segments for Public Broadcasting's *Electric Company* (chiefly the *Letterman* spots), but another projected series for General Foods (*Dig*, about the earth) was curtailed after one show. Happily, the Hubleys have just completed a mini-series for CBS called *Riders of the Carousel*, about the eight stages of man's life scheduled for airing in early 1975.

Hubley, like Chuck Jones, will not bend to the economic pressure of television. Referring to the Saturday-morning standard fodder, he told *Variety*, "I know how that stuff is made. It's assembly-line stuff which can have no feeling, no personal attention. As a filmmaker and artist, I'm not interested."

Alas, the networks don't seem to be interested in anything *but*. Yes, they will sponsor occasional half-hour specials and pay good money, because these are programs which air in prime-time and can be repeated for several years, netting a handsome profit. Yes, they will occasionally commission a quality show for prestige's sake, as when ABC hired Jones to produce *The Curiosity Shop*. But the rules for a weekly cartoon series are more strict: the product must be manufactured cheaply, and earn ratings and attract sponsors immediately. If it doesn't, it's dropped. It's much easier to schedule a seventeenth season of reruns for *The Jetsons*.

A disturbing new trend has studios like Filmation doing animated programs based on live characters from previously filmed shows, such as *Star Trek, I Dream of Jeannie, My Favorite Martian*, and *Lassie*. This reduces animation to the ultimate level of non-art, and serves no earthly purpose—except to make certain people a lot of money. Well, Walt Disney made a lot of money, and so did Warner Brothers, and MGM, and even Jay Ward. The monetary goal is simply an inadequate excuse for the garbage that masquerades as animation on network TV. Creative people have shown that it doesn't have to be this way.

Where are you, Bullwinkle, now that we really need you? ⁂

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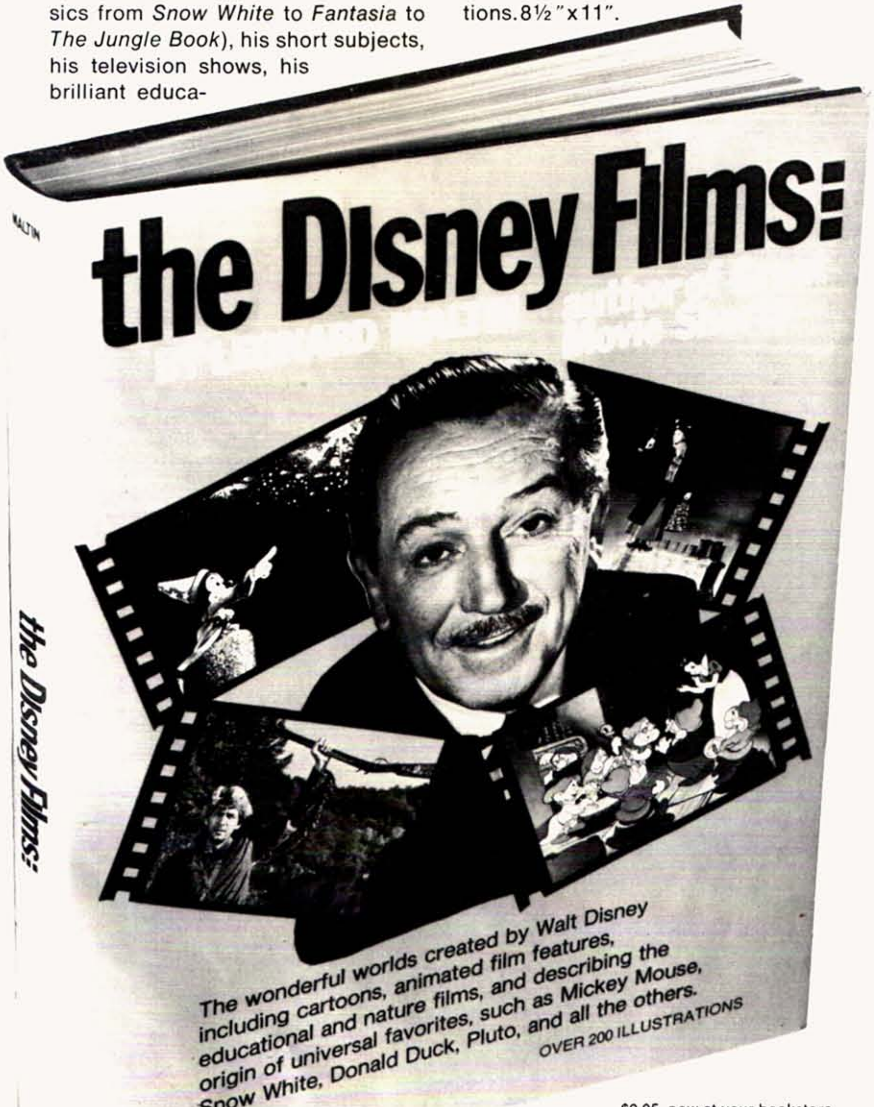
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

One wonders how Straub will resolve the related problem of camera placement in his MOSES AND AARON film: will he reveal the necessary facial distortions of the singers in closeups, or preserve the opera house illusion of relative repose in long shots?

October 15: At long last, a Fassbinder film I can celebrate! MARTHA, inaugurating a season of new German cinema at the National Film Theatre, pushes the campy and distancing effects of THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT and ALI until they serve up their richest fusions and clearest contradictions. Practically any given moment of this startling masterpiece is enough to warrant a scream or a giggle, and staggering uneasily between these extremes encourages us to appreciate the horror story (virgin librarian loses father, marries sadist) in all its various and overlapping aspects. A parody of bourgeois marriage, informed by Fassbinder's characteristic empathy and compassion; an improbable meeting ground for Hollywood in the Fifties and Dreyer (with some scenes suggesting either a Minnelli remake of GERTRUD or a Sirk adaptation of Georges Bataille, with intermittent traces of VAMPYR); a festival of fluid camera movements, balancing deep-focus effects and candy-box colors; and a mounting sense of the monstrous as Helmut's insane demands and accelerating cruelties against his fragile wife fit with increasing snugness into the commonplace banalities of soap opera.

Helmut is played by Karlheinz Böhm, the creepy hero of PEEPING TOM—fleshed out here to suggest a hulking slab of respectable granite—while Martha is expertly incarnated by spindly and sparrow-like Margit Carstensen, in a freakish mannerist performance of near-epic proportions. People who don't like this film call it self-indulgent, which I take to mean not boring enough to qualify as classicism nor quite rigorous enough to register as either measured or monolithic. I suppose five minutes or so could be dropped from the film without serious damage; but considering the fact that the film virtually lives in its excesses, I can't imagine preferring a tamer or saner version.

November 1: Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's PENTHESILEA: QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS is clearly and unabashedly a theoretical film, which means that only a handful of people in London seem interested in seeing it. No matter. Split into five autonomous "one-take" sequences—actually two reels each, with semi-invisible ROPE-like junctures—this ambitious and difficult work explores a series of didactic possibilities, how to convey information through sounds and images, and invites us to compare and juxtapose the alternatives at every level.

Starting with a mime of Kleist's *Penthesilea* filmed in one static and alienating long shot, the film subsequently reverses itself in a sequence featuring words and camera movements, where a lecture about the film's subject by Wollen while moving through a garden terrace and living room is accompanied by the "subtext" of the camera's independent path through the same general space, zeroing in on the cue cards left behind by Wollen for some witty, playful, and paradoxical effects. Next comes a lengthy presentation of diverse art objects relating to the Amazon myth (from ancient sculpture to Wonder Woman frames) accompanied by Berio's "Visage" and separated by animated wipes and maskings; then a simultaneous recitation of a feminist text and projection of a silent feminist film; and finally sequence number five which presents four TV monitors replaying the four previous sections (eventually supplanted by new material) while the camera periodically isolates individual screens and soundtracks.

Jean Simmons in GUYS AND DOLLS

Initially somewhat soporific—before the overall design becomes evident—but ultimately fascinating, PENTHESILEA offers just as much as one is willing to bring to it, rewarding intellectual collaboration but scrupulously avoiding the discourse of illusionist narrative while exploring "the space between a story that is never told and a history that has never yet been made"—contrasting diverse presentations of texts and relative surfaces that accumulate around a hypothetical subject.

November 16: Samuel Fuller's FORTY GUNS on BBC-2. Concluding a series of three Fuller Westerns—I SHOT JESSE JAMES and THE BARON OF ARIZONA were shown the previous weeks—this rough gem is brutally distorted by the BBC's infuriating habit of (1) cutting off both sides of the CinemaScope frame and (2) re-editing the film in the process, so that now (for instance) the celebrated endless tracking shot through the town is marred by a cut. This sort of tampering is nothing new, of course: only three weeks ago, BBC-2 had the lousy idea of broadcasting Dovzhenko's EARTH with added sound effects—a barrage of twittering birds and crickets, moaning peasants, etc.—which sabotaged the film even if one turned the volume off, because it necessitated showing it at the wrong speed.

Since FORTY GUNS has a partially incomprehensible plot to begin with, the losses tend to be strictly formal rather than narrative (apart from the inevitable censor's cuts). But what still comes through with remarkable clarity is how—in striking contrast to the mystery-play concentration and unswerving narrative progression in I SHOT JESSE JAMES—FORTY GUNS is such a workshop of *uncontinuous* formal ideas. Virtually every character, scene, and shot stands at an oblique angle to every other, splintering an already not-so-lucid storyline into a thicket of uneven, autonomous slabs jutting out in every conceivable direction. This cacophony of styles, like that of Godard's in the late Sixties, is curiously enough an attempted negation of style. So powerful is the force of the dialectic in each director's work that their strategies often seem to derive from the premise that no single approach is possible, therefore *every possible approach is necessary*. No wonder that the ideology of both directors' films is so ambiguous: CHINA GATE is as full of paradoxes as LA CHINOISE.

Refusing to stand still long enough to sustain a consistent strategy, FORTY GUNS seems to benefit rather than suffer from its abbreviated shooting schedule—a ten-days' wonder with all forty of its guns (figuratively) firing at separate targets, resulting in one of the most non-linear movies in the history of Hollywood. Perhaps it is the one Fuller film that most reflects his legendary shooting method of beginning every shot by firing a gun and ending it with the command "Forget it": it is hard to think of a more succinct parody of existentialism. ⁂

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documentary film maker
and cinema historian

Basil Wright

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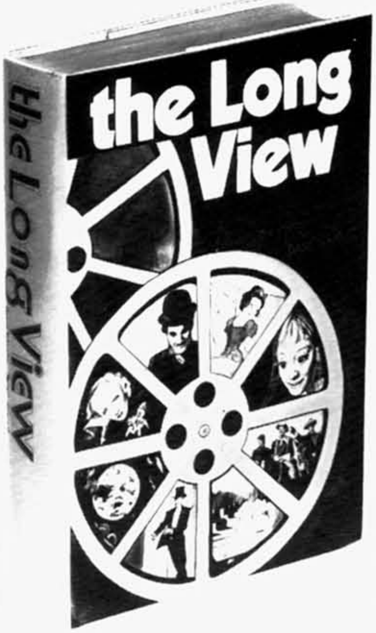

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WITHER THE AFI?

by Austin Lamont

On December 16, the House of Representatives defeated an enabling bill which would have provided the American Film Institute with direct federal funding. The bill, HR17021, was defeated by a two-to-one vote. The House defeat killed any Senate action but the bill may be reintroduced in the 1975 Congress by its original sponsor, Representative John Brademas of Indiana.

Most of the people in the non-theatrical film community who have heard of the AFI have heard something negative about it, and have heard disappointing things about its director, George Stevens, Jr. The plain truth, as the AFI's record clearly shows, is that Stevens is mainly interested in the Hollywood film industry; and even when the AFI had money, the film community outside of Hollywood got little of it, despite their obvious needs.*

When the AFI was founded, one purpose was to coordinate, serve, and aid the film community as an umbrella organization. It didn't. The film community found out that the AFI wasn't really interested in serving the non-theatrical section, that George Stevens, Jr. didn't live up to his commitments to them, and that they would have to do their own coordinating and get their aid elsewhere. And so they have. One recent example is the Committee on Film and TV Resources and Services (The Mohonk Conference) which was conceived and organized outside of the AFI and funded by foundations; their report is due in early spring. A second is the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, a new trade association in New York financed by members' dues and a foundation grant. The AFI directly funds only two chief activities; the AFI Catalog, and the Center for Advanced Film Study in Beverly Hills. Most of the rest of its activities, including its grants to independent filmmakers, are handled by contract (not by grant) from the National Endowment.

Under the defeated bill, the AFI would no longer have had anything to do with the National Endowment for the Arts. A reading of the bill gives a hint of what the new AFI would have been like. The bill provided for about fifty per cent government representation on the AFI Board of Trustees. It also gave the AFI power to "undertake and coordinate . . . the production of films for charitable, patriotic, educational, or other public purposes"; the AFI could also contract out such films. It sounded very much as if the AFI was planning to become a producing organization, perhaps similar to the National Film Board of Canada. If this did happen, the AFI as it was originally conceived would have withered away, which could have meant abandonment of, among other things, the unfinished AFI Catalog—a serious loss.

Representative Brademas, sponsor of the AFI bill, assures us that the National Endowment for the Arts would continue to make film grants, but no longer to the AFI. The Endowment's Public Media Panel, which screens all video and film applications, is made up of a broadly representative group of film experts whose decisions have been fair to the entire film community, and whose grants have been well-administered. The film community itself has become more experienced at cooperation and in making group decisions. But perhaps an umbrella organization would still be needed, and some of the things it might want to look into are more cooperation between Hollywood and the non-theatrical film community; distribution of non-theatrical films; further development of regional film study centers and cinémathèques; stronger local film organizations; accreditation for film schools; and a code of ethics for film festivals.

The best way to keep informed about any future bill is through your local film organization. Meanwhile there's still something you can do: write to Senator Pell and ask that funding for the Public Media section of the National Endowment for the Arts be increased in the future. That's where the non-theatrical film community's leadership is coming from now, and that's where leadership in film will be coming from in the future.

You can get further information on the AFI bill, or register your opinion, with any of the following Representatives and Senators:

John Brademas, Chairman, House Select Subcommittee on Education. Washington DC 20515.

Claiborne Pell, Chairman, Senate Special Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities, Washington DC 20510. ⁂

Austin Lamont, the former Managing Editor of FILM COMMENT, has returned to filmmaking.

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* Film publications documenting this are *Film Society Review*, January through May, 1971; *Film Quarterly*, Summer 1961 and Winter 1971-72; FILM COMMENT, Summer 1971; *Screen*, Summer 1971; and *Variety*, August 20 and November 27, 1974.

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"WHAT IS THE BFI?"

by Verina Glaessner

For fifteen days in September, the staid facade of the British Film Institute was rent by the first strike in its forty-year history. The strike gained official, white-collar union recognition, and was the result of action taken not by any radical minority but by a majority of the Institute's staff. Staff members who had spent most of their working lives with the BFI—the very last people who expected or wished to become involved in the whole ritual of industrial activism—were picketing, with placards and leaflets, in front of the Institute's twin Dean Street entrances. The strike gained prestigious support from, among others, Alexander Kluge, Otto Preminger, and R. W. Fassbinder. ("What," Preminger asked as he signed the solidarity document, "is the BFI?")

Against the expectations of many a cynical BFI-watcher, the impossible had happened: the staff had united. Work ground to a halt in the archive, the information department, the regional branches. The editorial offices of the BFI's publications, *Sight and Sound* and *The Monthly Film Bulletin*, were deserted. The National Film Theatre was picketed: audiences fell off, silent films were run without musical accompaniment, and Leslie Hardcastle, the theatre's controller, was seen performing usherette's duty. The small NFT cinema was closed for a time.

The issue which so resoundingly and unexpectedly provoked what no amount of rhetoric had been able to achieve was the abrupt and inept dismissal of Kevin Gough-Yates, the acting head of the Archive. The staff claimed wrongful dismissal; the union backed the staff. (Gough-Yates has since been replaced on the BFI payroll, and the case is awaiting arbitration.) But Gough-Yates' dismissal was less a reason for striking than a clerks' last straw.

Three years ago, the small, radical BFI Members' Action Group expressed and capitalized upon stirrings of discontent when it called for the resignation of the Institute's Governors.* (The BFI is largely state-aided, and is ruled by an appointed group consisting of a Director and some twenty Governors.) To the surprise of many, the Action Group's incendiary device caught fire, and Stanley Reed resigned as Director; to the surprise of some, his replacement by Keith Lucas, formerly a TV and film designer and minor academic, failed to clear the air.

Concessions to the malaise endemic among staff and membership simply raised a storm of their own. Much of the discontent stemmed from an information bottle-neck; but the publication of a *BFI News* folio packed with intramural puffery could not satisfy those seriously concerned with either using or managing the various departments. And no sooner had the principle been accepted whereby two member governors, elected by the membership, would be included on the board than the management ratified the election of Nicolas Garnham, the most active and recalcitrant, for only one year instead of the usual two. By now, staff feelings were turning from muted pessimism to palpable outrage.

One pointlessly megalomaniacal proposal had Lucas himself assuming headship of the Archive—a move that could have virtually isolated that body from all international cooperation. That the scheme was seriously suggested at all, and then persisted in despite widespread opposition, both escalated and justified the staff's feelings of persecution. The principle of consultation (always previously acknowledged) seemed finally to have been ignored, especially when one department head found her job advertised in the national press. As the financial year drew to a close, and staff members were attempting to run their departments on frayed-shoestring budgets, some £500 was being spent on a chandelier, and the Dean Street offices were being given a needless face-lift.

To be sure, Lucas' decisions were anything but random. His was the reality of the time-and-motion specialist. One of his first moves—and one which the staff saw as counter-productive, both economically and psychologically—was to import Alan Hill, a charted accountant. But Lucas (with his ideal of "pan-institutionalism") and the Archive (with its vaunted autonomy) could hardly be expected to coexist peacefully. Michael Pye, in the *Sunday Times*, perceptively noted "the delicate business of persuading dedicated enthusiasts to operate like efficient civil servants."

However delicate the Director's attempts to run the BFI like a business, the operation proved frighteningly wasteful of the staff's talent, knowledge, and skill, and threatened to corrode any positive role the BFI might play within British film culture. It's the staff's refusal to become productive automatons that has widened the gap between cinema specialist and businessman; and the chasm has never been so gaping as it is now. More than one anecdote (perhaps apocryphal, but certainly credible) circulated by the staff portrays members of the Governing board as woefully lacking in *savoir-film*—such as the one about a new appointee who phones up a department head for advice on the best book to tell him all he needs to know about the cinema.

Lucas was originally selected as a kind of high-powered pro, but some of his maneuvers seem less than professional. When he named a working party, he neglected to tell them they were supposed to rubber-stamp decisions he had already made; when they proceeded conscientiously with their task, they found every one of their major decisions overturned. As one staff member commented: "I wouldn't have minded if he'd spent a year looking at the Institute and at the workings of various departments, and then come to his conclusions. But the scope of the Archive was simply redefined without consultation." No department was immune.

It may be the Institute's structure that is at fault, rather than the way it is being managed. But the creation of a welter of committees and subcommittees, staffed by minor celebrities dabbling in the celluloid arts, has done little to counter the isolation of the governing body and director from the department heads and other staff—let alone from the user-members. Perhaps because the Governors are unpaid, the posts seem to attract (with some exceptions) the wrong people for the wrong reasons. The appalling waste of effort can't be stopped until most of the Governors are drawn from the ranks of those notably committed to an urgent concern for the development of film in Britian—and there are plenty to choose from—or until the duties now resting with the Director and Governors devolve upon Institute staff members. To function creatively, the BFI must run on enthusiasm—especially with the current dearth of petrol. At the moment, that enthusiasm is sadly dissipated.

Verina Glaessner, formerly the film editor of *Time Out* (London), is now free-lancing.

*See Ian Cameron's London Journal in the November-December 1972 FILM COMMENT.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Interviews with Joseph Losey, Mel Brooks, Martin Scorsese, John Schlesinger, Dusan Makavejev, Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck, A.I. Bezzerides. Articles on Paul Mazursky, John Ford's war documentaries, George Stevens' wartime comedies, Nathanael West's B-Pictures, Ernst Lubitsch's THE MERRY WIDOW (with a memoir by Samson Raphaelson).

BOOKS

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BY RAOUL WALSH

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1974; hardcover $10.00; 377 pages, index, illustrations.

REVIEWED BY GEORGE MORRIS

Raoul Walsh's autobiography won't set any literary precedents, but as one of the handful of first-hand recollections of major American directors, it is reasonably informative, immensely entertaining, and invaluable to the film historian. In its intermingling of the personal and the specific with a generalized historical overview, the book is not unlike the structure of such Walsh classics as THE ROARING TWENTIES and GENTLEMAN JIM. The book further parallels Walsh's career in that tangy episodes in the director's youth are described with the relish of the anecdotal story-teller that flavors Walsh's best Thirties and Forties films, whereas a mellowness emerges in the later stages of the book, similar in tone to the serenity of such late masterpieces as THE TALL MEN and BAND OF ANGELS.

Compared to Frank Capra's clarion call to his own greatness, Walsh's chronicle is a model of unpretentiousness and self-effacement. Although his penchant for irrelevant anecdotes and amatory dalliances threatens to interrupt the easy flow of the narrative, these indulgences ultimately become as important in the overall structure of the book as they are revealing about the man himself. Like his films, Walsh is so damned likable, his raucous humor so infectious, that any overly analytical criticism would be niggling. (I *would* like to correct the caption under the illustration that identifies the actress with Clark Gable and Walsh as Jane Russell. The actress is Jean Willes, and the film, also incorrectly identified as THE TALL MEN, is THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS.)

Walsh offers no startling insights into the development of the American Cinema, the growth of which parallels his own career. It is interesting, however, to speculate once again on the twists of fate that hurled so many early pioneers of film into their lifelong professions. After a youth of sailing, cowpunching, wrangling, and a stint as an assistant to a French surgeon in Butte, Montana, the combination of a bad knee and a touring production of *The Clansman* conspired to initiate Raoul Walsh into the acting profession. Walsh's attempts to land a job acting on the New York stage, his acceptance of movie work in a day when respectable actors shunned film acting, his early acting chores for Pathé at Union Hill in New Jersey, and his fortuitous alignment with Biograph and D.W. Griffith, all manage to illustrate the halcyon days when film began to emerge as a force to be reckoned with, when luck and accident could parlay a man into a sixty-year career.

The first half of Walsh's autobiography is the most entertaining, the sequence recounting the director's encounter and journey with Pancho Villa being considerably more than that. The last part of the book frequently lapses into the recitation of "famous people I have known" that mars so many autobiographies. Walsh also telescopes events and time to the point that the reader who is unfamiliar with Walsh's filmography and its chronology, will get the impression that OBJECTIVE BURMA (1945) was filmed in 1941, and SALTY O'ROURKE, (also 1945) in the late Forties.

These reservations are admittedly minor, in the light of the abundant love of life and work that filters through every page of *Each Man in His Time*. I don't believe there can be any doubt, following the Museum of Modern Art's superb retrospective of Walsh's careeer earlier this year, that Raoul Walsh belongs in the Pantheon of the American Cinema. The depth of vision and the continual exploration and refinement of personal themes span five decades. To those critics who believe Walsh's career culminates in the three obsessive masterpieces of the late Forties—PURSUED, COLORADO TERRITORY, and WHITE HEAT—I entreat that they re-view the Fifties films to which the term "culmination" more appropriately applies. In the majestic leisure of the epic cattle drive in THE TALL MEN, in the mythical confrontation between cavalry and Indians in A DISTANT TRUMPET, in the helplessness and incomprehensibility of man against God's nature as well as man's in THE NAKED AND THE DEAD, and consummately, in the resignation and anguish of Clark Gable's Hamish Bond in BAND OF ANGELS, we are allowed the highest privilege of the artistic experience, a glimpse into the infinite.

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OZU: HIS LIFE AND FILMS

BY DONALD RICHIE

University of California Press. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1974; hardcover $14.50; 275 pages, illustrations, bibliography, index.

REVIEWED BY JOAN MELLEN

Donald Richie once compared the form of his witty comic novel, *Companions of the Holiday*, to that of an Ozu movie. Now he has given us at last his full-length study of Ozu. It is a fascinating pursuit of the director, permitting us to witness two artists at work and the merging of kindred sensibilities, Richie's and that of his natural subject, Ozu. Each views the world through the ironies of *mono no aware*, that omnipresent sense of the unalterability and sweet transience of things as they are. It is the mood that adds characteristic transcendance and peace to Ozu's work, as in the bitter uplift at the end of TOKYO STORY or the limited harmony enjoyed by the married couple at the end of THE FLAVOR OF GREEN TEA OVER RICE and by the middle-aged actor and actress of FLOATING WEEDS.

Mono no aware is the lens through which *Richie* views Ozu, and so the experience of reading his book becomes analogous to watching an Ozu film. The structure of Richie's book parallels that of an Ozu film. We follow Ozu through the construction of his scripts, which, lacking any "plot" as we know it, are composed of what Richie christens "emotional modules." Beginning from some pedestrian situation, and before writing any dialogue, Ozu would create a card for each scene. Richie visualizes Ozu and his ubiquitous scriptwriter and friend Kogo Noda "seated at the big table in their Tateshina villa, moving about, as though in some extended game of double solitaire, large and much scribbled-on and sketched-over manila cards." The reader becomes a secret observer, a voyeur as Ozu and Noda, long into the night, write and drink, with Ozu playfully judging a script's value by the number of empty whiskey bottles lined up the morning after.

"Script" is followed by "Shooting." We join Ozu on the set as Richie mediates the world of Ozu's films with that of the Japanese culture from which they emerge: "He uses rooms as a proscenium . . . and since his fixed camera position precluded his following his characters about, their entrances and exits are often as theatrical-looking as they are in real Japanese life." "Shooting" also contains a fine section on Ozu's shot composition and a very germaine discussion of "enryo" or reserve. It refers to a formal relationship between people, closest to our notion of "standing on ceremony," and it defines the typ-

Joan Mellen is the author of *Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film*, published by Horizon Press in 1973.

ical attitude of Ozu's characters toward each other. "Enryo," Richie suggests, permeates the world of the Ozu film, concerned as it is with the lives of Japanese who know each other and, in fact, who usually belong to the same family. Last, and least important to Ozu, Richie shows us the principles of Ozu's "Editing."

Ozu's work took precedence over all personal elements in his life. Accordingly, only after reconstructing the typical Ozu film does Richie consider the man in a "Biographical Filmography." Here we are offered a portrait of Ozu as the spoiled Mama's boy, a man who never married and who willfully renounced a higher education by spending the day of his Middle School entrance examinations at the movies, viewing THE PRISONER OF ZENDA. Surprisingly, he was a heavy drinker from his youth. The man emerges as a most unlikely creator of those films characterized by calm and staid formality which find profound calm in accepting things as they are and life as a diminished thing. Richie explores the man in terms of what he did, as Ozu presented his characters, without psychologisms. This too is fitting, for the heavy drinker obsessed with his mother was also a clever and subtle reader of the political exigencies of his time.

Richie deals amply with the issue of morality in Ozu's work. Raising the question of the extent to which Ozu affirms traditional values, he persuades us to withhold easy judgment by considering carefully Ozu's determination of that elusive concept, "tradition." My sense of Ozu is that his characters are not allowed nearly so wide a range of choice as Richie suggests. But, like Ozu, Richie balances his judgments with a feeling for the evanescence of his subject, its refusal to be reduced to categories.

One of the beautiful aspects of Richie's criticism is that while, as a penetrating critic, he exhausts his subject meticulously, he, unlike many, produces the feeling of leaving it open, providing space for the reader's own experience of Ozu. If Ozu embodies the purported "real Japanese flavor," Richie has uniquely captured the taste of Ozu in a very lovely book. ⁂

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shoot accurately with only his ears to guide him. The final bloody end of the film (somewhat confusing in the badly cut and spliced print I saw) is supposed to be grandly tragic, I suspect, but I could not help seeing it as a Turkish variation on the kind of balderdash I knew and loved in old-fashioned American films like MOON OVER BURMA, in which a blind Albert Basserman manages to kill a cobra with a bullwhip. Güney's intentions are plainly more serious than that, which makes the weaknesses of ACI the more disappointing.

Gören was sorry that he had been unable to get a print of Güney's most recent film for me to see because in UMUT SUZLAR (THOSE WITHOUT HOPE), he explained, the director was moving into a new, poetic phase, one that is apparently even more evident in the unfinished film. *Poetic* is an adjective that scares me even when it is used to discuss poetry, and I had a nervous suspicion that I knew what Gören meant. In UMUT, Güney's camera had indicated a fondness for faces, a willingness to linger in silences over the characters in contemplation. By ACI, that device had begun to go sour—too many "significant" poses, held too long with insinuating music under. Did he, I asked Gören, mean that Güney was using more closeups without dialogue, more emphasis on the slow, supposedly meaningful shot. The answer was *yes*. That was presumably what my Istanbul acquaintances—most of the Güney detractors had seen UMUT SUZLAR—meant by excessive artiness, and knowing my own prejudices well, I suspect that Güney's poetic journey is one that I would not find comfortable. Still, to be fair to my first informant in Ankara, UMUT and ACI are plainly major films in the context of the Turkish movie business. Beyond that, they—particularly UMUT—are certainly good enough to command an audience outside Turkey. They are not masterpieces by a long shot—not at all in the PATHER PANCHALI league—but they are interestingly conceived, well performed films which display a fine visual sense, an almost tactile preoccupation with the intimacies of Turkish life and a concern, at once local and universal, for man *in extremis*. ⁂

TOM & JERRY
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75

Avery's unit, for which he did some of his best work, particularly on Butch the Bulldog.

▪

In the two years that followed 1946, Irv Spence's rise was meteoric. He combined elements of crazy cartoon drawing with a new smoothness of line and animation that soon surpassed even Ken Muse's accomplished draughtsmanship. It is hard to imagine 1948, the peak year of "Tom and Jerry," without Spence's marvelous timing. MOUSE CLEANING, my candidate for the best cartoon of the series, is not only a great showcase for the animators, but integrates story and gags beautifully. Tom is told not to mess up the house by Mammy Two-Shoes or "We will be minus one cat around here when I get back." Jerry seizes the opportunity to get rid of Tom by proceeding to spread cigarette ashes on the carpet from an ashtray. Tom (animated by Spence) does a marvelous running skid and sweeps up the ashes with a whisk broom into a dustpan. Jerry continues to spread ashes, banging on the ashtray's spring door like a base drum. Tom is so mad that he reaches for the nearest thing he can find which is a big, ripe Technicolor tomato, and hurls it at Jerry's head. The resultant splat is surely the best tomato splat ever animated (Irv Spence). It hits the wall, spreads red tomato juice way up the wall in a few frames, and then a secondary splat follows this by a few frames. Great work!

Tom is agitated when he sees this and runs to get a bucket of soap and water. Jerry puts blue ink in the solution and Tom rubs off the tomato juice only to leave blue ink in its place. The subsequent "take" is perhaps the third best I've ever seen, after the wolf's in NORTHWEST HOUNDED POLICE (Ed Lane) and Porky Pig's in KITTY KORNERED (Rod Scribner). Tom sees the blue ink in the solution and covers his eyes, not believing it, then *slowly* uncovers them. Pop-Pop-Pop-Pop, *four* sets of eyeballs pop out, followed by the anvil-like crash of Tom's jaw hitting the ground (Irv Spence). Then Tom runs in when Jerry is about to squirt ink from his fountain pen onto the curtains. He grabs the pen away from Jerry and playfully pulls at the refill lever. SPLAT! A big spot appears on the curtains, at which Tom does another "take," a bit more subdued than the last one.

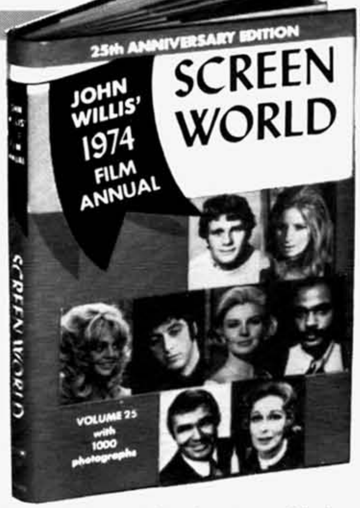
Mammy Two-Shoes is just about to open the front door when it bursts open and she is carried head over heels by the avalanche of coal which engulfs her. She pops out of the coal, covered with dust, sputtering, "Boy when I get hold of that low-down, good for nothin' . . ." Then Tom's head pops out of the coal and she says "Hey, you! Has you seen a no-good cat around here?" Tom's head is all black with coal, and Mammy-Two-Shoes mistakes him for a black man. Tom then speaks in a Negro dialect, "No, Ma'am, I ain't seen no cat, no place, no how, NOOOOOOO MA'AM!" as he gets out of the coal and shuffles along. Only Tom's head is black though, the rest of his body is the normal grey and white, so Mammy Two-Shoes is not fooled for too long and shouts "Hey you! Come back here! Thomas! Come back here!" and begins to pick up pieces of coal and heave them at Tom. (This funny sequence was animated by Ray Patterson, who had a knack for animating mush-mouth dialogue and a peculiarly spikey way of handling action.)

The last scene in MOUSE CLEANING is Tom running away from the coal. First he ducks one chunk, then gracefully "Irv Spences" his body away from the next one, then ducks a third, does a "Nya-Nya-Nya" with his fingers in his ears, then runs toward the horizon, followed by a lump of coal gracefully arcing toward him. When he and the coal are both dots in the distance, the coal hits him on the head, he bounces once and then falls flat on the ground, followed by an iris out on his prostrate form.

▪

I have tried to describe what I consider to be the best "Tom and Jerry" cartoons. The same observations can be applied to almost any of the 1948-1954 films; the same animators worked on them. Irv Spence, a "wild graceful dance"; Ray Patterson, "mush-mouthed spikes"; Ken Muse, scholarly, masterful Character man, and Ed Barge, just solid. The year 1948 also yielded such titles as KITTY FOILED, THE TRUCE HURTS, PROFESSOR TOM, and OLD ROCKIN' CHAIR TOM, surely one of the best stories, in which Tom and Jerry team up against the super-speed cat Lightnin', whom Mammy Two-Shoes hired to take Tom's place. In a hilarious scene animated by Irv Spence, Tom shoots an iron into the sleeping Lightnin's open mouth, and then gains complete control over him with a magnet. Some other superior titles in this series are HEAVENLY PUSS, CAT AND THE MERMOUSE, CUEBALL CAT, SLEEPY-TIME TOM, NIT-WITTY KITTY, TRIPLET TROUBLE, MOUSE FOR SALE, and DESIGNS ON JERRY, in which Jerry becomes involved with a stick-figure cat and mouse.

Some people criticize the "Tom and Jerry" cartoons for their "senseless violence" but the best "Tom and Jerrys" have "violence with sense," for never has animated slapstick been carried out with more pep, more feeling and with better movement than these venerable bastions of good fun. Compare them with the "Herman and Katnip" series done by Paramount in the late Forties and Fifties and it becomes apparent that there are no musical scores like Scott Bradley's, just repetitive themes, rather mundane story ideas in which you hardly ever feel any sympathy for Katnip, and a thoroughly destestable hero, Herman the Mouse. About the only good thing one can say about these cartoons is that they have occasionally creative "takes" by such people as John Genitellia or Dave Tendlar.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CORRECTIONS: Roger Greenspun on LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN

The gremlins were working overtime on our last issue. The chart adapted from Raymond Durgnat's "The Family Tree of the Film Noir" had two egregious errors: PORTRAITS AND DOUBLES, listed as a film title in the MIDDLE-CLASS MURDER section, should have been the title of a different section, and the titles beneath it boxed accordingly; and the subheading "Lover Kills Belover," with the two films beneath it, should not be there at all. We're sorry about those mistakes; we're also more than a little embarrassed.

In the proofreading and layout of Roger Greenspun's article on LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN there were more than the usual number of typographical errors, a couple of the photo captions were mislabeled, and the order of several paragraphs was hopelessly scrambled. Staff changes (we were between assistant editors at the time) and an unusually busy New York Film Festival schedule had something to do with the addled state of the editor's mind; but apologies are more in order than excuses. We think it only fair to Mr. Greenspun and to our readers that the article be reprinted, as it is below, with corrections. —Richard Corliss

Readers of Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady* may recall a passage late in the novel, just after Isabel Archer discovers the depths of her husband's complicity with the malignant Madame Merle, discovers indeed that her own marriage was a calculated product of that complicity. The paragraph is long, but it is especially beautiful:

"Isabel took a drive alone that afternoon; she wished to be far away under the sky, where she could descend from her carriage and tread upon the daisies. She had long before this taken old Rome into her confidence, for in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe. She rested her weariness upon things that had crumbled for centuries and yet still were upright; she dropped her secret sadness into the silence of lonely places, where its very modern quality detached itself and grew objective, so that as she sat in a sun-warmed angle on a winter's day, or stood in a mouldy church to which no one came, she could almost smile at it and think of its smallness. Small it was, in the large Roman record, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her from the less to the greater. She had become deeply, tenderly acquainted with Rome; it interfused and moderated her passion. But she had grown to think of it chiefly as the place where people had suffered. This was what came to her in the starved churches, where the marble columns, transferred from pagan ruins, seemed to offer her a companionship in endurance and the musty incense to be a compound of long-unanswered prayers. There was no gentler nor less consistent heretic than Isabel; the firmest of worshippers, gazing at dark altar-pictures or clustered candles, could not have felt more intimately the suggestiveness of these objects nor have been more liable at such moments to a spiritual visitation. Pansy, as we know, was almost always her companion, and of late the Countess Gemini, balancing a pink parasol, had lent brilliancy to their equipage; but she still occasionally found herself alone when it suited her mood and where it suited the place. On such occasions she had several resorts; the most accessible of which perhaps was a seat on the low parapet which edges the wide grassy space before the high, cold front of Saint John Lateran, whence you look across the Campagna at the far-trailing outline of the Alban Mount and at the mighty plain, between, which is still so full of all that has passed from it. After the departure of her cousin and his companions she roamed more than usual; she carried her somber spirit from one familiar shrine to the other. Even when Pansy and the Countess were with her she felt the touch of a vanished world. The carriage, leaving the walls of Rome behind, rolled through narrow lanes where the wild honeysuckle had begun to tangle itself in the hedges, or waited for her in quiet places where the fields lay near, while she strolled further and further over the flower-freckled turf, or sat on the stone that had once had a use and gazed through the veil of her personal sadness at the splendid sadness of the scene—at the dense, warm light, the far gradations and soft confusions of colour, the motionless shepherds in lonely attitudes, the hills where the cloud-shadows had the lightness of a blush."[1] The evocation of landscape painting toward which the passage builds is hardly gratuitous, for James is at pains to place his heroine—gazing "through the veil of her personal sadness at the splendid sadness of the scene"—in essential relation to a landscape understood as art, to equate Isabel's feelings with what she sees, to objectify, indeed to pictorialize her situation as at once the raw material for and the achievement of artistic form. Without willing it, but by living through the misery he has caused her, Isabel has out-distanced her aesthete husband, Gilbert Osmond, the connoisseur of coins, to become a better work of art than any he could imagine. The most admirable of those high-spirited American girls who manages to recreate the spirit of Europe mainly by her unsuspected capacity for suffering, Isabel begins to fit into the brilliant "portrait" that is the fulfillment of James' great novel.

ALL PHOTOS: MOMA/FILM STILLS

Joan Fontaine and Louis Jourdan in Max Ophuls' LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN.

I am reminded of Isabel Archer—her look if not her situation—by the moment in LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN when the heroine, Lisa, as a fully grown young woman, first confronts the pianist Stefan Brand on the street outside his apartment. It is winter. Lisa, wearing black, stands in the distance. And Stefan, noticing for the first time a new and mysterious beauty to add to his string of conquests, begins his line of easy chatter. The evening continues through dinner, the marvelous visit to an almost deserted amusement park (the film's most famous set piece), and finally the seduction of Lisa that results in the baby who will cause the first great change in her life. But it is not the event that concerns me so much as the figure of Lisa, in black, alone at the end of a darkened street, emerging for the first time not as a self-effacing love-sick child but as a compelling image, something to make a man turn around and take notice. Like Isabel Archer, she has been in a special sense "objectified." And as with Isabel, the quality of Lisa as object derives from the intensity of an inward state of being. In Isabel's case, suffering; in Lisa's case, devotion. Standing in black against the darkness, she has become the type or figure of the woman who loves and all but hopelessly waits for her love's return.

For Ophuls, as for James, this transformation of the point-of-view character into a character to be viewed represents a major dramatic coup. And for Ophuls, it is one of the ways in which Lisa's story differs from the stories of her grander sisters in other movies, Madame de and Lola Montès. They too manage a kind of canonization, becoming martyrs to their wayward passions. But on their way to apotheosis they do not quite achieve the recognition in specifically human terms that grants Lisa a curious equality with the man she so doggedly adores, and for which she seems to have been striving from birth (that second birth she speaks of, the birth of her consciousness) until wished-for death. The impulse shows itself everywhere, in the recklessness with which she ruins each chance at conventional happiness, in the woman of mystery she makes of herself in pursuing her desire ("She is not like the others," exclaims the proprietress of the shop where Lisa models to a would-be admirer, "I don't understand that girl"), in the very picture she creates as a teenager with her nose pressed against a glass door she holds open so that Stefan Brand may pass through.

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[1] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, ed. Leon Edel. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956, pp. 423-424.

In some measure it is how Lisa looks—the love-light in Joan Fontaine's eyes—that is important, and that so consistently outrages modern audiences unaccustomed to the exposition of a romantic ideal. The audiences have it wrong. They are really seeing a Romantic ideal—capital "R"—and perhaps the most stunning expression the movies have given us of a form of awareness that in our literature goes back at least to the Keats odes, with their dense sweet savoring of a joy perpetually out of reach—and dying. "And though you didn't know it, you were giving me some of the happiest moments of my life," writes Lisa in her letter, recalling herself as a young girl, alone, in bed, in a dark room, listening to Stefan practice his piano—all unaware of the fate she is fashioning for him in her adoring mind. She is virtually a heroine of deprivation. Before the movie is over her triumph will have been to have made something, not only of her love, but also of her deprivation.

It is surely no original observation to see some of the late Ophuls movies as machines for the creations of heroines. Madame de, Lola Montès—from foolishness or promiscuity to a kind of sainthood, a sainthood directly based upon the preconditions of foolishness or promiscuity. Lacking either of those more flamboyant options, the middle-class Viennese Lisa resolutely does without. "She is not like the others . . . every evening as soon as the shutters are closed, off she goes straight home." And Lisa admits that her employer was right: "I was not like the others. Nobody waited for me. Off I went—not home, but to the only place that had ever seemed home to me. Night after night I returned to the same spot. . . ." This is where Stefan first speaks to her, "I've seen you before—a few nights ago—right there—waiting—there," picking up the very terms of her devotion, as if determined pathos were its own reward.

Lisa has not lacked for practice. As a child, before her father died, she took imaginary journeys with him via travel folders—an anecdote she tells Stefan during a make-believe scenic train trip in the winter amusement park. Michael Kerbel, in a valuable essay on LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN,[2] sees the make-believe train trip as a metaphor for the characters' "inability to progress," and he sees the amusement park generally as a demonstration of Lisa's entrapment in her own illusions. She prefers the park in the winter because then you can imagine how it will be in the spring: "Because, if it is spring, there's nothing to imagine, nothing to wish for." On these points I think Kerbel is wrong. Lisa is quite without illusions, even as to the man she loves. The day her heart really goes out to Stefan is the day she, as a young girl, first hears him flub an arpeggio in that gloriously schmaltzy concerto theme that is, so far as we can tell, virtually the only piece he knows how to play. It is not illusion that snares Lisa, but imagination, the irreducible appeal of not having what you want. As for lack of progress, where is there to go? Stefan travels a lot, picks up businessmen's wives in America, even climbs mountains—after which, he admits, there is nothing to do but come down. The film's two real train trips are both disasters, one taking Lisa's lover and the other taking her son out of her life—in effect, forever. Lack of progress, Ophuls' celebrated circularity, is a slippery affair. Turning in place may suggest mere Hell, as in LA RONDE. Or it may promote a greater wisdom, as in LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN, where Lisa's profoundest activity is in one sense to spin around herself a viable place for loving. The waltzing, twirling, stay-at-home lovers of MADAME DE are surely prefiguring Heaven, as are the vacationing whores in the last part of LE PLAISIR.[3] In Ophuls' cosmology, as in any cosmology worth the name, Heaven and Hell are mirror images of one another.

But if the unillusioned Lisa is happily going nowhere, she is not without an itinerary and a certain attitude toward travel: time travel mostly, as befits the active mind. She engages Stefan in her attitudes. "I see you as a little girl," he tells her. (Lisa with a candied apple in the amusement park; but she never really stops presenting herself as a little girl, right up to her last—posthumous—appearance in the movie.) And she sees him as a figure in a wax museum.

"Would you pay a penny to see me?" he asks.

"If you'd come alive."

Both are on display: Lisa for what she was and never entirely ceases to be; Stefan for what he might, if he were not his irredeemably dissolute self, otherwise become.

In fact, as opposed to fancy, both their positions are extravagant and wildly unwise. They both waste their time. But the alternative to wasting time is saving it, which is worse. Lisa's petit-bourgeois stepfather and her aristocratic husband are conservers, both prudent and in their own ways kindly men. It is not by accident that they perform the only real acts of willful cruelty necessary in carrying out the film's general fate. The time-wasters have the deeper vision, even about time. It is Lisa who more than once has the insight to understand her life as "measured."

•

Time is of course the key to everything:

"We'll come for you at five. That will give you three hours."

"I don't mind being killed—but you know how I hate to get up in the morning."

"By the time you read this letter, I may be dead. I have so much to tell you, and I have so little time . . ."

I count five ways of figuring time just in the first half-dozen important lines of the screenplay. Before the movie is over there will be several more—including the marvelous conceit of a closing time for the all-woman orchestra in the amusement park casino. A typically Ophulsian gesture: even the musicians who play for the dance of life grow tired and must have their time off. To be out of time is to be dead, like the ghostly narrator, a voice from the past, who addresses the darkened movie theater at the beginning of LE PLAISIR. Or like Lisa, who, with her letter to Stefan, beguiles away *his* time, though his life hangs in the balance, and if he is to save it he has only three hours left.

Molly Haskell, in a brilliant study of MADAME DE,[4] has identified "delirium and determinism" as "the twin components of the director's style." Let me apply this insight to LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN, not to style exactly, but to a matter of content that is virtually a justification for style.

In the famous opera-house sequence, just before Lisa, after years of separation from him, again sees Stefan, a graying and rather tired Stefan, she meditates: "The course of our lives can be changed by such little things. So many passing by, each intent on his own problems. So many faces that one might easily have been lost. I know now, nothing happens by chance.

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[2] FILM COMMENT, Vol. 7, no. 2, Summer 1971, pp. 60 and 61.

[3] Like Eurydice among the blessed spirits in Elysium, or Papageno feeling the first stirrings of a desire for marital bliss—offered as musical lessons in MADAME DE and LETTER. Ophuls' theater-going heroines tend to leave early exactly the operas they should be hearing out to the end.

[4] In *Favorite Movies: Critics' Choice,* ed. Philip Nobile. New York, Macmillan, 1973, pp. 133-145. This is the best single study of Ophuls I have seen.

Every moment is measured, every step is counted." Then she recognizes Stefan and: "Suddenly, in that one moment, everything was in danger, everything I thought was safe. Somewhere out there were your eyes, and I knew I couldn't escape them. It was like the first time I saw you. The years between were melting away." It is not the luxuriance of the sentiment that engages me—though I rather like it—so much as the potential of the "moment" for both measure and danger, for both time's inexorable passing and the instantaneous flash. The first prepares for the second, and the second makes bearable the first. The dangerous moments are the only escape from time that Ophuls offers, and they are finally the justification for falling in love. All of LA RONDE is an (intentionally) unsuccessful attempt to simulate them —which may be why each of the pseudo-passionate lovers in LA RONDE finds himself caught short by time. Stefan, the tattered romantic voyager of LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN, tries a little of the same game in his canned seduction chatter the night after the opera: "This is just the hour for a little late supper. Or is it too late? Well, it makes no difference. You're here, and as far as I'm concerned, all the clocks in the world have stopped." And so on, until Lisa, in sheer disgust, runs away. He is of course wrong about the clocks. One will toll its bell for him in a little while, as soon as he puts down the letter he has almost finished reading. But in his talk he at least parodies Lisa's passionate recklessness; and he knows the terminology, if not the terms, of the role he is attempting to play.

Lisa, by her own admission, lives in a state of suspended animation until Stefan in each of his rare appearances awakens her. Stefan lives a flamboyant imitation of the same condition. His rhetoric and her reality have a lot in common. But while the talk is all for him, by him, and—through her—about him, the images are generally for her. During the long flashback that constitutes virtually all but the beginning and end of the movie, it is Lisa's consciousness, Lisa's expressive face, Lisa's figure that occupy the screen. And although there is never a hint that Stefan penetrates her mind—though lifting her veil is his characteristic gesture, he is perpetually seeing her for the first time—she nevertheless comes to stand for something that moves him, whether he wills the motion or not. So it is not unfair to say that if LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN creates the image of its heroine, it also creates the will of its hero. By Lisa's example it brings the prodigal classicist Stefan, the might-have-been Mozart, into an acceptance of Romantic (and romantic) responsibility. The duel her letter forces upon him is no more than just recompense for a lifetime of seducing other men's wives. But it also grants him an unprecedented reward: it allows him to remember her.

In the course of the movie, Lisa enters Stefan's apartment three times. The first time, as a young girl, she sneaks in and explores the sacred precincts until she is surprised by Stefan's mute servant, John. In the context of Max Ophuls' cinema the passage is rather special: tentative, uncertain, the subjective camera advancing as if unsupported by the cranes and dollies —those dated instruments of motion-picture destiny that Ophuls helped make immortal. The camera is preoccupied with the comfortable clutter of the musician's bachelor apartment. And this time the rich Ophulsian décor functions as an impediment—expressive of nothing so much as the need to get through it, to make contact as it were with the spirit of the place. The spirit remains all too hard to find, and Lisa is discovered through her clumsiness in holding onto things.

Joan Fontaine in the hospital in LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN.

She does not enter the apartment again until her one night of love—when she becomes another of Stefan's conquests, a fact that the camera notes from high up the building's spiral staircase, the position Lisa used to occupy when jealously watching the parade of women to the lover's lair. Nothing remarkable happens this time. It is a seduction offered and accepted, a kiss, a blackout. Lisa's sexual victory belongs not to Lisa but to the history of one-night stands. Surely that is how it is meant to be. Fulfillment is typical. But deprivation is unique, personal, creative, the carefully nurtured sum of a lifetime of not getting what was wanted. The only moment when the film is controlled by neither Lisa's vision nor her image is the only moment when potential and actual merge. Lisa lives for it; eventually she will begin to live so as to recreate it. In itself it is essentially nothing.

The third time, Lisa enters Stefan's apartment as a woman of the world—a woman in love who has made her wager and now must lose it. Stefan instead rambles on about clocks and offers a champagne supper. But he has trouble opening the bottle and prolonging the conversation; and in the oddest way he seems determined to hold onto Lisa, to keep her interest in the poorly managed *tête-à-tête,* by the very means most likely to lose her. In fact she does disappear, but not without leaving a reminder, a bunch of flowers she had bought just for her visit. They sit there, the token of Lisa, on a little checkerboard table, together with a vase and a burning candle. Stefan has mentioned that he worships a goddess, not a god, and now the goddess has established an altar of sorts in her priest's own lodging. This is audacious, but apposite, considering the nature of his worship.

Stefan doesn't play the piano anymore, but he still flirts (which has always been his real métier anyway), and the impulse of the final portion of the film is to raise his flirtation into something different but the same—to change it from an obsession to a commitment consciously accepted. Lisa's letter, a moral tale if ever there was one, provides the impetus to Stefan's reformation. It has been working all through the movie, and in the final loving recriminations: "I had come to tell you about us, to offer you my whole life. But you didn't even remember me. . . .If only you could have recognized what was always yours, you could have found what was never lost." The logic of that last statement may have slightly puzzled Stefan, as it does me. But its imaginative force is inescapable, especially for a man who thinks of his life as a search—for some unknown ideal, or just for another woman. In the special environment of Ophuls' movie, I don't think it makes much difference.

The treatment of Lisa's last visit to the apartment rather casually reverses the treatment of the first. It is now Stefan who seems out of place in his own home, at a loss for where to find the champagne glasses, how to produce the ice—in the most demeaning way, hung up on the sorts of material paraphernalia that Lisa had once been so concerned to spiritualize. Lisa had been discovered by Stefan's servant, John. Stefan is in a sense found out by Lisa's servants, us. But a Stefan seriously on the skids is already a Stefan ripe for regeneration. And in the superheated morality that attends the end of LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN, ripeness is all.

So Lisa departs, leaving a modest shrine behind her. It is a noble departure, worthy of the end of Madame de, who comes to rest, together with her well-traveled earrings, on display in their own small chapel. But LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN differs significantly from MADAME DE, and

Lisa's shrine is not exactly inviolate. For one thing, Stefan doesn't really know it exists; he sees it as a little table with a candle, a vase, and some flowers on it. For another, Lisa is not yet finished. She has still to wander off into the night, to contract her son's fatal disease, and to write her long, engaging, and also fatal letter. In the complex exchange that ends the film, it seems reasonable at least to consider that Lisa, by the crucial process of occupying his last few hours, effectively kills Stefan.[5]

People who see the movie as overly sentimental would do better to realize that it is almost as much concerned with the affectionate combat, as with the unrestrained affections, of love. If Lisa gets hers against Stefan, he gets his own in return. Having accepted the duel (having had to accept it because he has wasted his getaway time reading a letter), he has accepted his role as seducer. The clock chimes. The seconds for the duel arrive. Stefan walks to the little checker-board table, pulls a flower from the vase, makes it into a boutonniere, and goes out to meet his doom. That flower, presumably part of the sacred offering Lisa had left for herself, becomes a jaunty decoration in a gentleman's lapel. The Unknown Woman—that mysterious lady of the shadows, that image of romantic fidelity—has been taken on for what she also always has been: the Unknown Woman, like the Unknown Soldier, one of so many, endlessly forgettable, remarkable chiefly for her anonymity. Actually, Stefan does his best for her, just as she has always done for him, and his best is not suddenly to become a repentant would-have-been connubial companion. Rather, it is to go out with as much of his own style as he can muster. Near him in mind if not in body, Lisa really is the one thing he has been searching for all these years. Unknown but perfectly familiar, unattainable but always within reach, she could never have been exclusively his life. So she becomes something more special. She becomes his death.

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In terms of the Ophuls canon, LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN has a happy ending: everybody of any importance dies. In such less happy movies as LA RONDE and LOLA MONTÈS everybody has to go on living. The curse that threatens all the passionate people in Ophuls is repetition—the dark obverse to the sustaining dance that is their glory. The old man who cannot bring himself to stop dancing in the first episode of LE PLAISIR illustrates this most poignantly; but Lola Montès grown sick from reliving her past, or any of the couples caught in the ceaseless boring sexual exchange of LA RONDE, will also do. For Ophuls, passing time—age—offers neither peace nor forgetfulness, but rather a continuation that eventually becomes an accumulation of memory and desire. There is no evading this destiny. But there is a way of arresting it, of holding it perpetually in abeyance—by becoming not its victim, but its example. It takes only a certain recklessness, which the loving but unfortunately pragmatic Lola Montès lacks, but which the protagonists in LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN have in abundance. It takes a willingness not to escape. Stefan and Lisa even share a certain gallows sense of humor—which makes this in a serious way the wittiest of Ophuls' late movies, and informs the romantic story with an intellectual toughness and resonance that is not quite what you'd expect at the end—and *as* the end—of such unrequited devotion.

Everyone admires, or at least respects, the spectacular visual programs that saturate the Ophuls films. In this respect, LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN is more modest, technically less audacious than any of the post-war European films. But I am inclined to think it not greater but a more satisfactory whole. Its most gorgeous effects—the camera looking down the spiral staircase leading to Stefan's apartment, the beautiful dissolves through darkness from railroad station to hospital that mark the climactic changes in Lisa's life—these feed immediately into a narrative progression of extraordinary richness and efficiency. This may represent a classic moment for Ophuls, before the world held close in memory begins to crack, and the ornate flats of the setting open up to reveal the intricate sound-stage machinery that in the later films justifies the Romantic fiction.

This time, no justification is needed. The Romantic fiction is suffused with meaning as perfectly achieved as in the descriptive passage from Henry James with which I began. For me Ophuls is not a brilliant decorator, but a master fabulist. I love his stories, or the stories he chooses to tell—just as I love his performers, and his settings, and the graciousness of the background music, the themes and waltzes, upon which he floats his movies. And Ophuls returns that love with a vision of a cruel and always dangerous, but absolutely cohesive, universe. ⁂

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[5] Whether Stefan survives the duel, which takes place after the movie ends, seems to me about as pertinent a question as how many children had Lady Macbeth.

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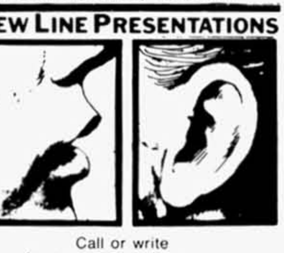

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with egg-yokes, might be interested in finding out that the most up-front articulation of this rather bizarre egg-fetish comes around in BOOBY-HATCHED (1944), an extremely well-paced accounting of mother-love and a doleful half-hatched duckling, an egg-with-legs named Robespierre. Tashlin's yuks about screaming teeny-boppers in the Fifties rock-and-roll satire THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT are preordained by earlier rollicking cartoon laughs at a wartime era's fandom: in SWOONER CROONER (1945), bobby-soxer hens vacate their egg-laying posts, cause shutdown at Flockheed Eggcraft, to faint, flip out, or melt-to-puddles at rooster imitations of Frankie Sinatra, Bing Crosby.

In his intro to the Edinburgh Film Festival monograph on Mr. Tashlin, Robert Mundy notates that the director "uses Brechtian devices of distantiation" in his feature comedies, and this Tashlin does, but as far as the semantics go, the "Brechtian" biznis is something of an *ex post facto* ascription, doncha think? If Tashlin were knowingly emulating anybody's "devices of distantiation," it probably would be those of his earlier co-cartoon-practitioner Tex Avery, an artist who has demolished more formal screen illusionism, and has exposed more levels of artifice per foot of film than *any* movie-maker, live-action or cartoon, before or since. For example, in the stunning aerial finish of Avery's HECKLING HARE (1941), Bugs Bunny plummets down from a lofty pinnacle precipice and falls screaming through the sky, along with the doltish canine nimrod who's been trailing him throughout the film, and their fall, at first, is vertiginously terrifying, their screamings and their arm-flailings really bloodcurdling—but Tex Avery's visual diction is distinctly modernistic, so enforces our awareness that we're watching a cartoon: their spectacular drop to earth is extended for nearly a full-minute's time, and the impossible prolongment makes the once-fearsome falling seem ridiculous, and finally hilarious as Bugs and the dog apply their breaks, grind to a halt, and land unharmed on the ground below (Avery had used this gag before, with a forever-falling aircraft in his 1940 aeronautics-survey CEILING HERO, and Bob Clampett repeated it with Bugs Bunny and a gremlin crewing a long-cascading plane in 1943's FALLING HARE). Even more "distantiated" is THUGS WITH DIRTY MUGS (1939), an insightful Avery treatise on movie gangsterdom at Warners, where the dogfaced mobster Edward G. Rob-'em-some successfully holds up a phonebooth ("Operator, this is a stickup!"), and during a different phone conversation, violates the split-screen effect by leaning over the divvying diagonal-line, and furtively leads his shifty fellow-gangsters to crack a safe, but tells their German Expressionist shadows to stay behind, and in the end, gets turned in on State's Evidence volunteered by an eye-witness in the theatre's second-row ("I know he did it—I sat through this picture twice"). Avery's syntactical japing often directly intimidates the viewer: in the THUGS film, even inspector Sherlock (F.H.A.) Homes expresses his displeasure with the viewer's tattle-tailing, and the incarcerated Edward G. (being made to stay after school and blackboard "I've been a naughty boy" one hundred times) sticks his tongue out at the audience just before the iris-out.

Where Harman-Ising and Friz Freleng were sticklers for tight sound-and-image synchronization, Tex Avery, like any other self-respecting Modernist, got more mileage by having his sound- and image-tracks fall out of proper alignment, so that when the narrator gushes Longfellow in VILLAGE SMITHY (1936), he has to bide his time while waiting for the expected "spreading chestnut tree" to thud into frame, and while waiting for the village smithy to stand. The fairy-godmother in CINDERELLA MEETS A FELLA (1938) doesn't arrive on schedule either, since the old crone was out galavanting at some beer joint the night before, and once she is bum's-rushed in at last, her maladroitly percolated magic wand sparks Santa Claus and reindeer instead of a luxury pumpkin coach. Most often, at Warner Brothers, Avery worked with pre-existent texts, so that his zany cartoon imagery could modernize and bowdlerize traditionally simpering adaptations of Charles Perrault (in 1937's LITTLE RED WALKING HOOD), of Mother Goose (in 1940's GANDER AT MOTHER GOOSE, so that we finally see who *fathered* all those children who live in a shoe), of Harriet Beecher Stowe (in 1937's UNCLE TOM'S BUNGALOW, so that during the mellerdramatic finale, Topsy and Little Eva can ham it up on ice floats that were

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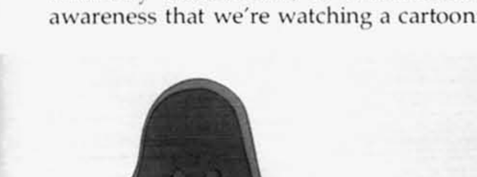

Standard pose of Friz Freleng's regular supporting-player Yosemite Sam.

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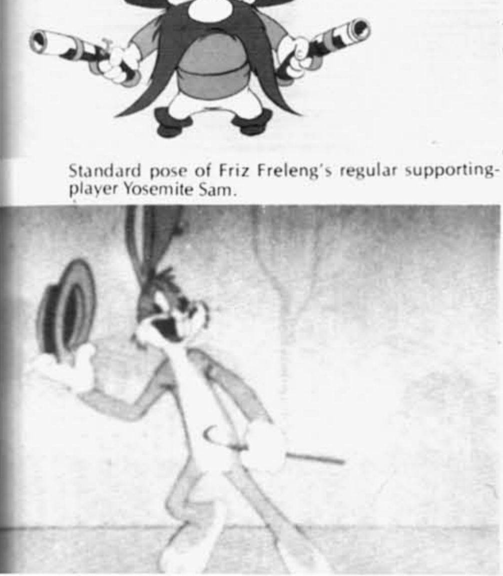

Freleng's Bugs Bunny, as hoofer, in STAGE DOOR CARTOON (1945).

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LETTERS

To the editor:

Contrary to Jonathan Rosenbaum's introduction to his interview with Jacques Rivette (FILM COMMENT, Sept.-Oct. 1974), the first major *Cahiers* critic to embark on a feature film was Claude Chabrol, not Rivette. Chabrol shot LE BEAU SERGE between December 1957 and February 1958, finished editing in May, and presented the film at the Locarno festival that year. Rivette began work on PARIS NOUS APPARTIENT in the summer of 1958 while Chabrol filmed his second feature, LES COUSINS. This information is confirmed in Claire Clouzot's *Le Cinema Francais depuis la nouvelle vague* and Guy Braucourt's *Cinema d'aujourd hui* volume on Chabrol.

All this may seem trivial, but it reflects a general misunderstanding of Chabrol's crucial role in the transition of the *Cahiers* critics from writers to filmmakers. Chabrol first realized what he and his colleagues had been asserting in print: a feature film could be made for very little money. He also made more tangible contributions, raising money for Rivette's first short (LE COUP DE BERGER, 1956), Eric Rohmer's first 35mm short (VERONIQUE ET SON CANCRE, 1958) and first feature (LE SIGNE DU LION, 1959), and Philippe de Broca's first feature (LES JEUX DE L'AMOUR, 1959.) Chabrol also helped finance Rivette's PARIS NOUS APPARTIENT (1958-60) and when that project over-ran its budget gave Rivette the left-over filmstock from *Les Cousins*.

I appreciate Rosenbaum's strategy in attempting to call attention to an important French filmmaker neglected by North American critics with their accustomed bias toward Truffaut, Godard, and Resnais (a bias born of that triumvirate's rise to fame at Cannes in 1959.) Indeed Rosenbaum could have pointed out the vital role LE COUP DE BERGER played as the first of a series of shorts by the *Cahiers* group between 1956-58, and made his point with equal force. As it stands, however, his commentary obscures the facts at the expense of a filmmaker whose contributions and achievements have received little serious attention in North America. Many of Chabrol's films have yet to receive commercial release here, and those that have often suffer glib and misinformed criticism. Rosenbaum has done little, I might add, to dissuade glibness in his own comments on Chabrol in "Paris Journal."

Charles Wolfe
University of Western Ontario

Jonathan Rosenbaum's reply:

As far as dates are concerned, I stand corrected; my own hasty references—Roy Armes' *French Cinema Since 1946*, the "June 1957" setting of PARIS NOUS APPARTIENT—may well have been less reliable than Mr. Wolfe's. I apologize, too, for a certain unexplained flippancy about Chabrol expressed in some of my Paris Journals, which I'll try to account for below. But if Mr. Wolfe will forgive me, I don't think he's exactly dissuading glibness himself when he assumes that Chabrol was a "major" (Wolfe) or "important" (Rosenbaum) *Cahiers* critic. This is a common assumption, but what supports it? Next to, say, Bazin, Godard, Rivette, Rohmer, Fieschi, Ollier, Bellour or even Moullet, his work for that magazine strikes me as minor indeed—unless one accepts his little polemic on "Little Themes" or "*Évolution du film policier*" as major pieces of criticism.

The historical role of Chabrol in the New Wave is indisputable, and I'd be the last to deny that this phenomenon was made possible by economic as well as aesthetic factors. But what has Mr. Wolfe to say about the worth of Chabrol's films, except to assume it? Admittedly, my less than kind remarks about DOCTEUR POPAUL and NADA are equally suspect; i.e., what had I to say about their worth, except to deny it? Clearly discussion must begin on a higher plane if it is to proceed anywhere at all. My biases on the matter are as follows:

(1) If I haven't written more often about Chabrol's films, this isn't because I haven't been seeing them; I'm still catching up with LANDRU and LA ROUTE DE CORINTHE, but I *have* gotten to twenty-two of his (by my count) twenty-nine movies. I used to keep going in the hopes of finding another work as powerful and/or as formally interesting as LES BONNES FEMMES; now the most that I look for is the rough equivalent of a James M. Cain novel—and sometimes I don't get *that* much, either. . . . I revelled in the baroque excesses of LA RUPTURE, and was disconcerted only when I discovered that certain English and American critics were being very solemn and serious about them. I also like the way Chabrol uses Jean Yanne's vulgarity, and his usual very efficient manner of telling a tale. I'm less sympathetic to the pomposity of TEN DAYS WONDER, with its conceit of turning Welles' Arkadin into Zeus, Hitchcock's Anthony Perkins into Christ and Marlène Jobert into Stéphane Audran while squashing all the minor virtues to be found in the Ellery Queen novel.

(2) Perhaps the best general case for or against recent Chabrol has been put by Robin Wood: "The savage derider of the bourgeoisie has become its elegaic poet." Since I happen to find the French bourgeoisie loathsome, I'm not temperamentally suited to appreciating elegaic poems on the subject, although if I found Chabrol even half as interesting as Ozu, I'd probably change my mind. One certainly can't call Chabrol uncritical of the bourgeoisie—JUSTE AVANT LA NUIT is subversive enough to make out a case for murder—but I think it's fair to say that his sensibility is closer to that of M. Homais in *Madame Bovary* than it is to Flaubert.

(3) Certainly, all of Chabrol's films should be distributed in North America; to my mind, even the worst of his movies is better than the best of most of the other Claudes (Berri, Lelouch, Sautet, etc.) But to suggest that any of the recent ones are within hailing distance of the last films by Bresson and Rivette—which are unavailable in North America, while NADA is not—is too reactionary a position for me to consider. I regard the former (LANCELOT DU LAC, OUT 1: SPECTRE, CELINE ET JULIE VONT EN BATEAU) as landmarks in the history of cinema; if Mr. Wolfe thinks the same case can be made for DOCTEUR POPAUL or NADA or even BLOOD WEDDING, I'd like to hear his reasons.

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WARNER BROTHERS
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ground out by an automatic ice-cube-making machine), of Public Domain folklore (in 1938's JOHNNY SMITH AND POKER-HUNTAS, so that the otherwise glum beheading can be greeted with a football cheer: "Give 'im the ax, the ax!"), and of John Steinbeck. Apparently, Avery found tremendous mirth in Steinbeck's archetype-troglodyte Lenny, who must have seemed to combine the comic qualities of both the ultimate mental-defective and the ultimate rube: in his wonderful spoof OF FOX AND HOUNDS (1941), the oafish, Lenny-like bloodhound repeatedly asks to know an elusive fox's whereabouts from the smoothtalking fox himself ("Which way did he go, George, which way did he go?"), and the bozo is repeatedly sent off heedlessly galumphing over the same picket-fence and over the same precipitous cliff-edge (incidentally, this fox—a rather debonair, "city slicker"-kind of fox, was a trickster who was like enough to Bugs Bunny, whom Avery had more or less perfected with A WILD HARE the year before, for Friz Freleng to later do a fairish remake of OF FOX AND HOUNDS as a Bugs Bunny picture—retitled, appropriately, FOXY BY PROXY). Avery's affection for Lenny didn't stop with his Warners period, and he went on to direct several other *Of Mice and Men* spinoffs at MGM, such as the George and Junior Bear films, and also LONESOME LENNY (1946), where he allows a different Lenny-like personality to crush to death his most obnoxious character—the literal snot-nose, Screwy Squirrel (and the mutilated Screwy raises a sign: "SAD ENDING, ISN'T IT?").

"For the benefit of the fight-fans in the audience," the narrator freeze-frames a cartoonily blur-lined fist-fight in Avery's DANGEROUS DAN MCFOO (1939), and to his queasy embarrassment, learns how often his combatants are hitting each other below the belt, konking innocent bystanders. In Avery's pictorial calendar review HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS (1940), the two moppets exemplifying Valentine's Day hug each other with an alarmingly adult lewdness, and the April Fool's Day calendar-entry is nothing at all (at this, the narrator giggles idiotically until the theatre-management slides a warning in: T'AIN'T FUNNY, M'GEE!). Reversing audience expectations frequently and smashingly in these blackout visual sallies, Avery sometimes slips in gratis pinches of an ironic social outlook: in the June Graduation Day of HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS, an idealistic professor magisterially presents a diploma to his student, and the kid scrams off with it to take his rightful place in the nearest breadline—and he finds his starry-eyed Professor a step ahead of him in line.

Most lamentably, time is not permitting me to discuss Tex Avery's other newsreel documentaries: the improbable exoticism of ISLE OF PINGO PONGO (1938), the geyser that turns out to be a little squirt in DETOURING AMERICA (1939), the lion-tamer who lost his head over his work in DAY AT THE ZOO (1939) or the supersensitive microphone in BELIEVE IT OR ELSE (1939), lowered down to record a niggling species of insect that is calling to its spouse ("Hey, Mabel!").

Even worse, Bob Clampett's phantasmogoric styling and splendiferous exaggerations cannot be studied in any more depth, at least not in this now-uncontrollable article, though one wishes to thank Clampett for the nebulous figments and apparitions that appear to Porky in PORKY IN WACKYLAND (1938), and for the somewhat less abstruse visions that appear to the "Fats" Waller cat in TIN PAN ALLEY CATS (1942), and for the freaked-out camel hallucinating other camels in the sweltering arid climate of PORKY IN EYGPT (1937), and for the cometary, blue-streaked draft evasion of Daffy Duck in DRAFTEE DAFFY (1944), and for the teensy-weensy Russian Kremlin gremlins who appear in a weightless zigzag single-file formation in the sky and proceed to dismantle Hitler's airplane piece by piece in 1944's RUSSIAN RHAPSODY and, lastly, for his boggling blackface SNOW WHITE parody COAL BLACK AND DE SEBBEN DWARFS (1943).

There's not quite enough time to do full justice to the postwar Jones-McKimson-Freleng triumvirate of cartoon directors—there was, for instance, Robert McKimson's anthropoidal omnivore with the sub-Cro-Magnon IQ, the Tasmanian Devil, in whose melees with Bugs Bunny, such as in BEDEVILLED RABBIT (1957), the entrances, if nothing else, were excellent: the Tasmanian Devil would chomp through anything in its path, gnaw through trees and buzz-saw through solid rock while in a shape of a tornado-y funnel. After Clampett left Warner Brothers in the middle Forties, Friz Freleng had exclusive dibs on the Tweety and Sylvester stories, which Freleng would most often begin by with the sight of the grubby unkempt scrounge Sylvester using a garbage-can lid as a platter as he serves himself trash and fishbones picked out from the ashcan heap—this pitifully eked-out repast probably being the only explanation as to why Sylvester would find as measly a twit as Tweety ever palatable in the first place (this vision of Sylvester, more commonly known, contrasts violently with Chuck Jones' spineless craven cat). Perhaps Sylvester's finest hour finds him caterwauling in his typical back-alley setting, as Freleng combines his postwar Sylvester characterization with his earlier musical themes: keeping Elmer Fudd awake all night in BACK ALLEY OP-ROAR (1947), Sylvester, instead of the usual feline yowling, dances a sailor's hornpipe, sings "You'll Never Know Where You're Going Till You Get There" in marchtime, and does an "Angel in Disguise" number that must have been inspired by Spike Jones' bandsmen (he accompanies himself with firecrackers, and by clunking himself in the head with bricks).

Even more is left unsaid of Friz Freleng's postwar work with Yosemite Sam—a Western desperado who, in many ways, is the exact antithesis of Elmer Fudd—countering Elmer's hairless dome and hairless body in that Sam was a handle-bar-moustached character *completely* covered with red hair (except for the nose, there's nary a flesh tone or a terra-cotta visible). And, unlike the often sappy and gutless Elmer, Yosemite Sam was risible and fallible by virtue of his *over*-aggressiveness, outwittable and outsmartable by virtue of his easily galled and consternated, anything-you-can-do-I-can-do-better desire to prove his gumption and gusto: in HIGH-DIVING HARE (1948), Bugs Bunny can hornswaggle Yosemite Sam again and again to do those dare-devil, death-defying dives from the platform's dizzying heights by simply daring him to "step across this line" ("Ah'm a' steppin'," Sam would foolhardily say, and down he'd go). Freleng made several other Yosemite Sam pictures worth talking about—before the merry-go-round broke down in 1962 or 1963.

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